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THE CRYSTAL STRUCTURE  
AND HYDROGEN BONDING OF  
MAGNESIUM SULFATE HEXAHYDRATE

Berkeley, California

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THE CRYSTAL STRUCTURE AND HYDROGEN BONDING OF  
MAGNESIUM SULFATE HEXAHYDRATE

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The Crystal Structure and Hydrogen Bonding of  
Magnesium Sulfate Hexahydrate\*

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Crystals of  $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  are monoclinic, space group  $C2/c$ ,  
with 8 formula units in the unit cell with dimensions

$$a = 10.110, b = 7.212, c = 24.41 \text{ \AA}; \beta = 98.30^\circ.$$

The atomic parameters were refined by least squares using  
x-ray counter data for 2576 independent reflections. The  
positions of the hydrogen atoms found by least squares  
and by Fourier methods confirm the assignment of hydrogen  
bonds made previously for the isomorphous  $\text{CoSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

Average interatomic distances are: water coordinated to  
Mg, Mg-O = 2.06 Å; hydrogen bonds, O-O = 2.82 Å; sulfate  
ion, S-O = 1.473 Å (uncorrected), 1.486 Å (corrected for  
thermal motion).

\*Work done under the auspices of the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission.

### Introduction

The crystal structure of  $\text{CoSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  has been described in a previous paper (Zalkin, Ruben, and Templeton, 1962). Hydrogen bonds were assigned on the basis of the positions of the heavier atoms, but the x-ray diffraction data did not give direct evidence of the hydrogen atom positions. The present paper describes a study of the isomorphous substance  $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  for which we have obtained more accurate diffraction data. These better data permit a more accurate description of the structure and indicate hydrogen atom positions in agreement with those deduced in the earlier work.

Crystals of  $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  are known in nature as the mineral hexahydrate (Dana and Ford, 1948). Other substances which have the same structure are  $\text{MgSeO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{NiSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{CoSeO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , and  $\text{ZnSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Groth, 1908).

### Experimental

Crystals of  $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  were grown from saturated aqueous solution at  $50 - 55^\circ\text{C}$ . Once grown and separated from the mother liquor, the exposed crystals could be kept at room temperatures for several months with no visible deterioration. A small single crystal with diameter of the order of  $0.02 - 0.08$  mm was mounted on a glass fiber and oriented for rotation about its  $b$  axis with the use of a Weissenberg camera. It was then transferred to a goniostat mounted on a General Electric XRD-5 apparatus, which was equipped with a molybdenum x-ray tube, a scintillation counter, and a pulse-height discriminator, for further alignment and data taking. Cell dimensions and crystal settings were calculated with  $\lambda(\text{K}\alpha_1) = 0.70929 \text{ \AA}$ . Intensities were measured for 2,576 reflections of which 289 were recorded

as zero. All of the reciprocal lattice points with positive  $h$  and  $k$ , out to a limit of  $\sin\theta/\lambda = 0.705$  ( $2\theta = 60^\circ$ ) were measured. Step scanning of the angle  $\theta$  was done for selected reflections to verify the settings for peak intensity. For the typical reflection, a single count was made for a fixed time of 20 seconds.

The absorption coefficient  $\mu$  for this crystal with Mo  $K\alpha$  x-rays is estimated as  $5.0 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . The resulting  $\mu R$  is less than 0.02. No correction was made for absorption or extinction.

An accurate trial structure was provided by the structure of  $\text{CoSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Zalkin, Ruben and Templeton, 1961); corresponding coordinates for atoms other than hydrogen differ by 0.01 or less in the two structures. Least-squares refinements were started using the programs of Busing and Levy (1959) on the IBM 704 computer. We then used the IBM 709 computer with the programs of Gantzel, Sparks, and Trueblood (1961). Each program utilizes the full matrix, and each minimizes the function  $\sum w(|F_o| - |F_c|)^2 / \sum w|F_o|^2$ , where  $w$  is the weighting factor and  $F_o$  and  $F_c$  are the observed and calculated structure factors. In this calculation, each independent reflection was assigned unit weight. The atomic scattering factors used in the refinements were  $\text{Mg}^{++}$  and neutral S (Tomii and Stam, 1958), neutral O (Hoerni and Ibers, 1954), and neutral H (Ibers, 1961).

#### Space Group and Cell Dimensions

The space group is  $C2/c$  ( $C_{2h}^6$ ). Reflections are absent with  $h+k$  odd, and  $h0\ell$  reflections are absent with  $\ell$  odd. The cell dimensions are:

$$\begin{array}{lll}
 a = 10.110 \pm 0.005, & b = 7.212 \pm 0.004, & c = 24.41 \pm 0.01 \text{ \AA} \\
 (10.06) & (7.16) & (24.39) \\
 \beta = 98.30 \pm 0.05^\circ & z = 8 & V = 1761.2 \text{ \AA}^3 \\
 (98.57) & &
 \end{array}$$

The values in parentheses are those reported by Ide (1938), changed from kX. The calculated x-ray density is  $1.723 \text{ g/cm}^3$ . The a:b:c ratios found in this and in previous work are:

$$\begin{array}{l}
 1.402 : 1 : 3.384, \quad \beta = 98.30^\circ \quad (\text{this work}), \\
 1.404 : 1 : 3.404, \quad \beta = 98.57^\circ \quad (\text{Ide, 1938}), \\
 1.404 : 1 : 3.337, \quad \beta = 98.57^\circ \quad (\text{Marignac, 1855}).
 \end{array}$$

The eight Mg atoms occupy two sets of positions 4(a) and 4(e) (notation of International Tables, 1952):

$$\begin{array}{l}
 4(a): \quad (0, 0, 0; 0, 0, 1/2) + C \text{ centering,} \\
 4(e): \quad (0, y, 1/4; 0, -y, 3/4) + C \text{ centering.}
 \end{array}$$

The sulfur atoms, ten sets of oxygen atoms, and twelve sets of hydrogen atoms occupy general positions:

$$8(f): \quad \pm(x, y, z; -x, y, \frac{1}{2} - z) + C \text{ centering.}$$

#### Refinement Procedure

At first hydrogen was omitted from the calculations. With isotropic temperature factors of the form  $\exp(-B \sin^2 \theta / \lambda^2)$  for each atom,  $R = \sum ||F_o| - |F_c|| / \sum |F_o|$  was reduced to 0.120 by three cycles of least squares. After correction of a few blunders in the original measurements, two more cycles reduced R to 0.118.

A three-dimensional Fourier synthesis with  $(F_o - F_c)$  as coefficients was calculated to seek out the hydrogen atoms. The resulting maps showed a peak wherever a hydrogen atom was expected, as well as many others of



about the same size which resulted from the anisotropic motion of oxygen atoms. A final isotropic refinement which included the hydrogen atoms but did not refine them resulted in  $R = 0.115$ .

Anisotropic temperature factors of the form  $\exp(-\beta_{11}h^2 - \beta_{22}k^2 - \beta_{33}l^2 - 2\beta_{12}hk - 2\beta_{13}hl - 2\beta_{23}kl)$  were introduced for Mg, S and O. Three cycles with hydrogen atoms included but not refined gave  $R = 0.056$ .

A set of  $(F_o - F_c)$  values were calculated with the resulting parameters for Mg, S, and O, but omitting hydrogen. Another "difference Fourier" was calculated using these numbers as coefficients. The twelve largest peaks in this function (Fig. 1) were near the predicted locations of the twelve hydrogen atoms.

As our least-squares programs at this time could not handle at one time a refinement of all the atoms including hydrogen with all the anisotropic thermal parameters, we ran a series of calculations refining parts of the structure separately. Temperature factors were isotropic for H and anisotropic for the other atoms. First the H atoms were included but not refined, while all other parameters were refined. Next H atoms were refined with the other atoms fixed. Then Mg atoms were held fixed while all other atoms were refined; in this series only the 923 reflections with  $\sin\theta/\lambda$  less than 0.5 were included. Finally the H atoms were fixed and all other atoms were refined. All this calculation reduced  $R$  to 0.053 for the 2576 reflections, including those with zero intensity. In the final cycle no coordinate or thermal parameter shifted more than 0.000001.

The resulting observed and calculated structure factors are shown in Table 1. The corresponding coordinates are listed in Table 2 and the thermal parameters in Tables 3 and 4.

By a special patch, the program was modified to allow simultaneous

refinement of all 159 variable parameters. Two cycles yielded no significant improvement in R nor any substantial change in coordinates. The results are not reported because parameters were oscillating; further cycles to attain convergence (at 0.9 hours per cycle with IBM 7090) seemed unjustified.

Standard deviations of coordinates estimated by least squares, with neglect of the possible error in the hydrogen parameters, are reported in Table 2. The similar estimates of standard deviations of the anisotropic thermal parameters range from 2 to 4 percent of the diagonal elements of the  $\beta$  matrices. They are not reported in detail because the effects of systematic errors in the data and of coupling with hydrogen parameters are of unknown and possibly considerably larger magnitude.

The standard deviations of hydrogen coordinates correspond to about 0.05 Å when estimated by least squares with neglect of errors in heavy atom parameters. The least-squares results and the Fourier results (Fig. 1) disagree in several cases by about 0.1 Å. The best evidence of the accuracy of these coordinates comes from the O-H bond distances which are expected to be somewhere in the range 0.9 to 1.0 Å, depending on the magnitude of the thermal motion effect. We find values 0.7 to 1.1 Å for eleven such bonds and 0.5 Å for O(7)-H(6). This scatter suggests 0.2 Å as the standard deviation of position of hydrogen, including the effects of systematic errors in the data.

The standard deviations of isotropic thermal parameters of hydrogen are estimated by least squares to range from 0.7 Å<sup>2</sup> for H(11) to 1.5 Å<sup>2</sup> for H(6). The scatter from the average value of 3.4 Å<sup>2</sup> corresponds to  $\sigma = 1.8$  Å<sup>2</sup>. This latter value may be a better estimate of the true accuracy, since there is no obvious reason for the thermal motions of the various hydrogen atoms to be substantially different.

## Discussion

The structure of  $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  differs very slightly from that already described for  $\text{CoSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Zalkin, Ruben and Templeton, 1962). The hydrogen bonds which were assigned in the previous study on the basis of oxygen positions are fully confirmed by the present results.

Table 5 lists some interatomic distances and their standard deviations, with no correction for thermal motion. The S-O bond distances in the sulfate ion average 1.473 Å with an average deviation of 0.007 Å. When a librational correction is made assuming the oxygen atoms to ride on the sulfur atom, the average becomes 1.486 Å with an average deviation of 0.004 Å. In the Tutton salt  $\text{Mg}(\text{NH}_4)_2(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  Margulis and Templeton (1962) also found 1.486 Å for the average S-O distance when it was corrected in the same way.

The average Mg-O distance is 2.06 Å without correction for thermal motion. Magnesium is also in water octahedra in  $\text{Mg}(\text{NH}_4)_2(\text{SO}_4)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  with average Mg-O = 2.07 Å and in  $\text{Ce}_2\text{Mg}_3(\text{NO}_3)_{12} \cdot 24\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Templeton, Zalkin and Forrester, 1962) with average Mg-O = 2.06 Å. In all three crystals the average Mg-O distance is 2.07 Å with thermal correction assuming in-phase motion.

The hydrogen bond O-O distances average 2.82 Å, but scatter over a considerable range as is common in complicated hydrate structures. The accuracy of the hydrogen positions, about 0.2 Å, does not justify tabulation of the many bond distances and angles involving hydrogen atoms.

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Table 1. Observed and calculated structure factors, each multiplied  
by 10.

(table to be reproduced photographically in two parts)

Table with multiple columns and rows of numerical data, including various mathematical labels like M,K=0,0, L FBOBS FCAL, and M,K=1,1. The data is organized into several distinct sections, likely representing different experimental runs or configurations. Each section contains a header identifying the run parameters, followed by columns of numerical values representing observed data points.



Table 2. Atomic coordinates in  $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

	Atom	x	y	z
	Mg(1)	0	0	0
	Mg(2)	0	0.9425	$\frac{1}{4}$
	S	0.8659	0.4490	0.1241
Sulfate oxygens	{ O(1)	0.7747	0.5986	0.1361
	{ O(2)	0.9834	0.4442	0.1665
	{ O(3)	0.9069	0.4854	0.0692
	{ O(4)	0.7961	0.2688	0.1211
Water about Mg(1)	{ O(5)	0.5852	0.7125	0.0483
	{ O(6)	0.5393	0.3162	0.0640
	{ O(7)	0.3126	0.5464	0.0231
Water about Mg(2)	{ O(8)	0.8887	0.1486	0.2820
	{ O(9)	0.8884	0.7405	0.2811
	{ O(10)	0.8598	0.9435	0.1799
Water (5)	{ H(1)	0.643	0.698	0.076
	{ H(2)	0.539	0.806	0.045
Water (6)	{ H(3)	0.495	0.232	0.060
	{ H(4)	0.614	0.340	0.093
Water (7)	{ H(5)	0.304	0.650	0.055
	{ H(6)	0.271	0.544	0.014
Water (8)	{ H(7)	0.840	0.092	0.312
	{ H(8)	0.937	0.235	0.296
Water (9)	{ H(9)	0.940	0.651	0.291
	{ H(10)	0.820	0.733	0.275
Water (10)	{ H(11)	0.849	0.831	0.164
	{ H(12)	0.847	0.033	0.164

Estimated standard deviations are: for Mg(2),  $\sigma(y) = 0.0002$ ;  
for S,  $\sigma(x) = 0.00006$ ,  $\sigma(y) = 0.00008$ ,  $\sigma(z) = 0.00002$ ; for  
oxygen,  $\sigma(x) = 0.0002$ ,  $\sigma(y) = 0.0003$ ,  $\sigma(z) = 0.0001$ .



Table 3. Anisotropic thermal parameters (each multiplied by  $10^4$ ) and root mean square amplitudes of vibration in  $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

Atom	$\beta_{11}$	$\beta_{22}$	$\beta_{33}$	$\beta_{12}$	$\beta_{13}$	$\beta_{23}$	$u, \text{\AA}$
Mg(1)	45	86	8.7	2	-1	-3	0.16
Mg(2)	46	72	7.8	(0) <sup>a</sup>	2	(0) <sup>a</sup>	0.15
S	46	72	9.8	0	-1	-1	0.16
O(1)	64	103	12.4	23	4	-1	0.18
O(2)	79	107	17.6	10	-17	-5	0.21
O(3)	81	120	13.2	0	10	-1	0.19
O(4)	68	85	15.4	-19	-4	6	0.19
O(5)	67	129	13.6	17	-5	-12	0.19
O(6)	87	175	19.0	-51	-15	26	0.23
O(7)	54	216	16.7	7	3	-21	0.21
O(8)	67	94	12.6	-2	6	-7	0.18
O(9)	61	113	16.0	-5	5	12	0.19
O(10)	103	103	10.7	-8	-8	2	0.20

<sup>a</sup>Zero because of 2-fold axis.

Table 4. Isotropic thermal parameters for H in  $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

Atom	$B, \text{\AA}^2$	Atom	$B, \text{\AA}^2$	Atom	$B, \text{\AA}^2$
H(1)	1.9	H(5)	5.6	H(9)	5.9
H(2)	5.2	H(6)	1.9	H(10)	3.1
H(3)	1.9	H(7)	4.3	H(11)	2.6
H(4)	5.7	H(8)	1.3	H(12)	2.0

Table 5. Interatomic distances and standard deviations in  $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

Atoms	Distance	$\sigma$
Water octahedron about Mg(1)		
Mg(1) - 2 O(5)	2.046 Å	0.002 Å
- 2 O(6)	2.044	0.003
- 2 O(7)	2.080	0.002
O(5) - O(6)	2.930	0.004
- O(6)	2.854	0.004
- O(7)	2.986	0.003
- O(7)	2.847	0.003
O(6) - O(7)	2.889	0.004
- O(7)	2.943	0.003
Water octahedron about Mg(2)		
Mg(2) - 2 O(8)	2.083	0.002
- 2 O(9)	2.054	0.002
- 2 O(10)	2.059	0.003
O(8) - O(8)	2.917	0.004
- O(9)	2.943	0.003
- O(10)	2.876	0.003
- O(10)	2.973	0.003
O(9) - O(9)	2.896	0.003
- O(10)	2.850	0.003
- O(10)	2.972	0.003

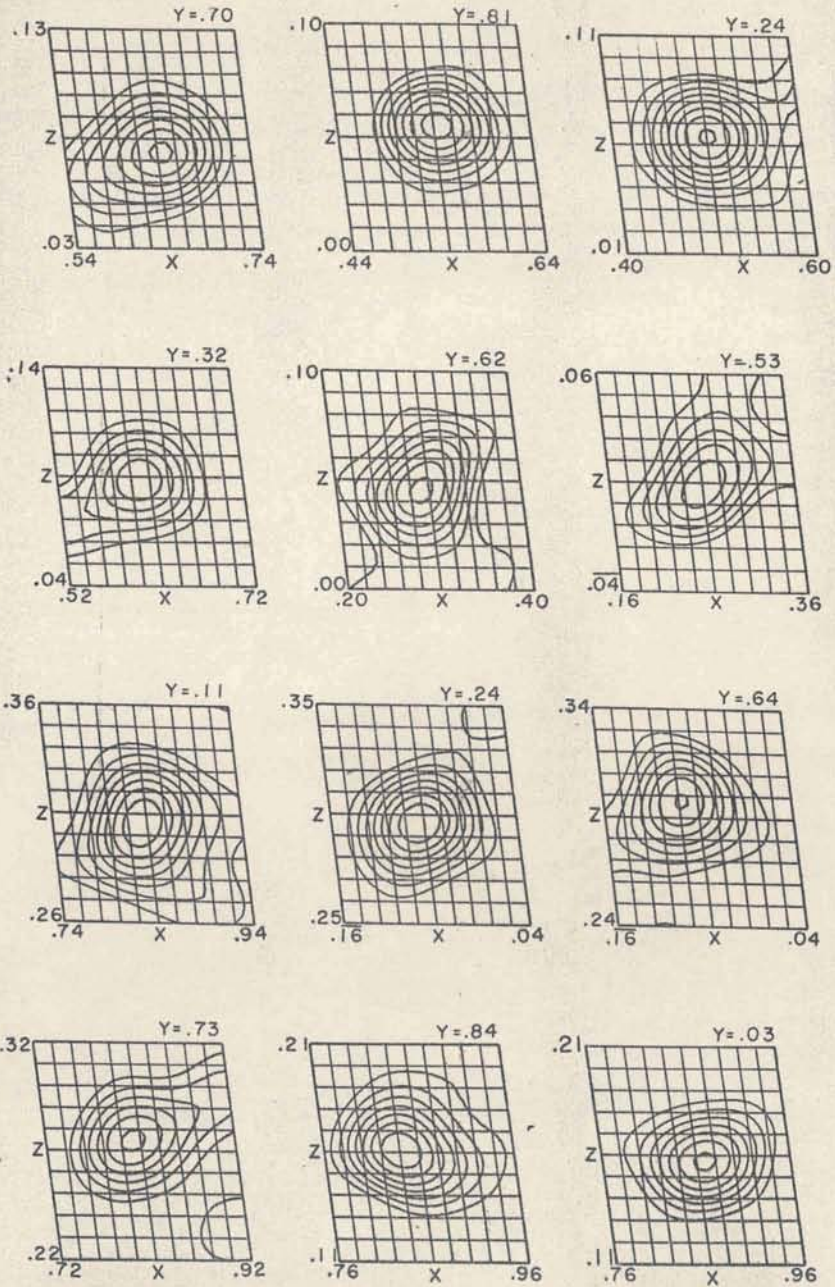
Table 5 (cont.)

Sulfate ion			
S	- O(1)	1.476	0.002
	- O(2)	1.460	0.003
	- O(3)	1.482	0.002
	- O(4)	1.475	0.002

Hydrogen bonds			
O(5)	- H(1) -- O(1)	2.785	0.003
O(5)	- H(2) -- O(3)	2.766	0.003
O(6)	- H(3) -- O(3)	2.747	0.003
O(6)	- H(4) -- O(4)	2.785	0.004
O(7)	- H(5) -- O(4)	2.906	0.003
O(7)	- H(6) -- O(3)	2.934	0.004
O(8)	- H(7) -- O(1)	2.796	0.003
O(8)	- H(8) -- O(2)	2.707	0.003
O(9)	- H(9) -- O(2)	2.721	0.003
O(9)	- H(10) -- O(8)	3.068	0.003
O(10)	- H(11) -- O(1)	2.794	0.003
O(10)	- H(12) -- O(4)	2.777	0.003

(Figure caption)

Fig. 1. Electron density sections through hydrogen atoms, with other atoms subtracted out. Contour interval approx.  $0.1 \text{ e}/\text{\AA}^3$ ; zero and negative contours omitted. Grid lines and contours were reproduced photographically from cathode ray tube of computer.



Hydrogen in  $MgSO_4 \cdot 6H_2O$

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