

Impact of Composition Approximation on Simulated Nuclear Fuel Cycle Metrics

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Objectives

Compare the validity and limits of simplifying Used Nuclear Fuel (UNF) composition. by comparing two UNF inventories:

- Detailed burnup and enrichment composition from database
- Averaged burnup and enrichment composition

We compare:

- Isotopic mass
- Waste management metric
- Equivalent ²³⁹Pu Factor [2]

Introduction

UNF Storage, Transportation & Disposal Analysis Resource and Data System (UNF-ST&DARDS) has been developed to integrate a centralized UNF database [3] and the SCALE suite of codes [1] to perform neutronics analysis for UNF management and disposal analysis. This comprehensive, high-resolution database lists every UNF assembly discharged in the U.S. (~ 244,896) and their properties (initial enrichment, burnup, ORIGEN-depleted isotopic composition, assembly type, etc.). While high resolution of this kind is exceptionally valuable, the volume of data can present challenges for processing and simulation computation times.

Methods

We compare the predicted U.S. UNF inventory in 2020 calculated using UNF-ST&DARDS to the same prediction calculated using a simplified UNF inventory assuming an average burnup and enrichment in order to assess the impact of this common simplifying assumption on fuel cycle metric accuracy.

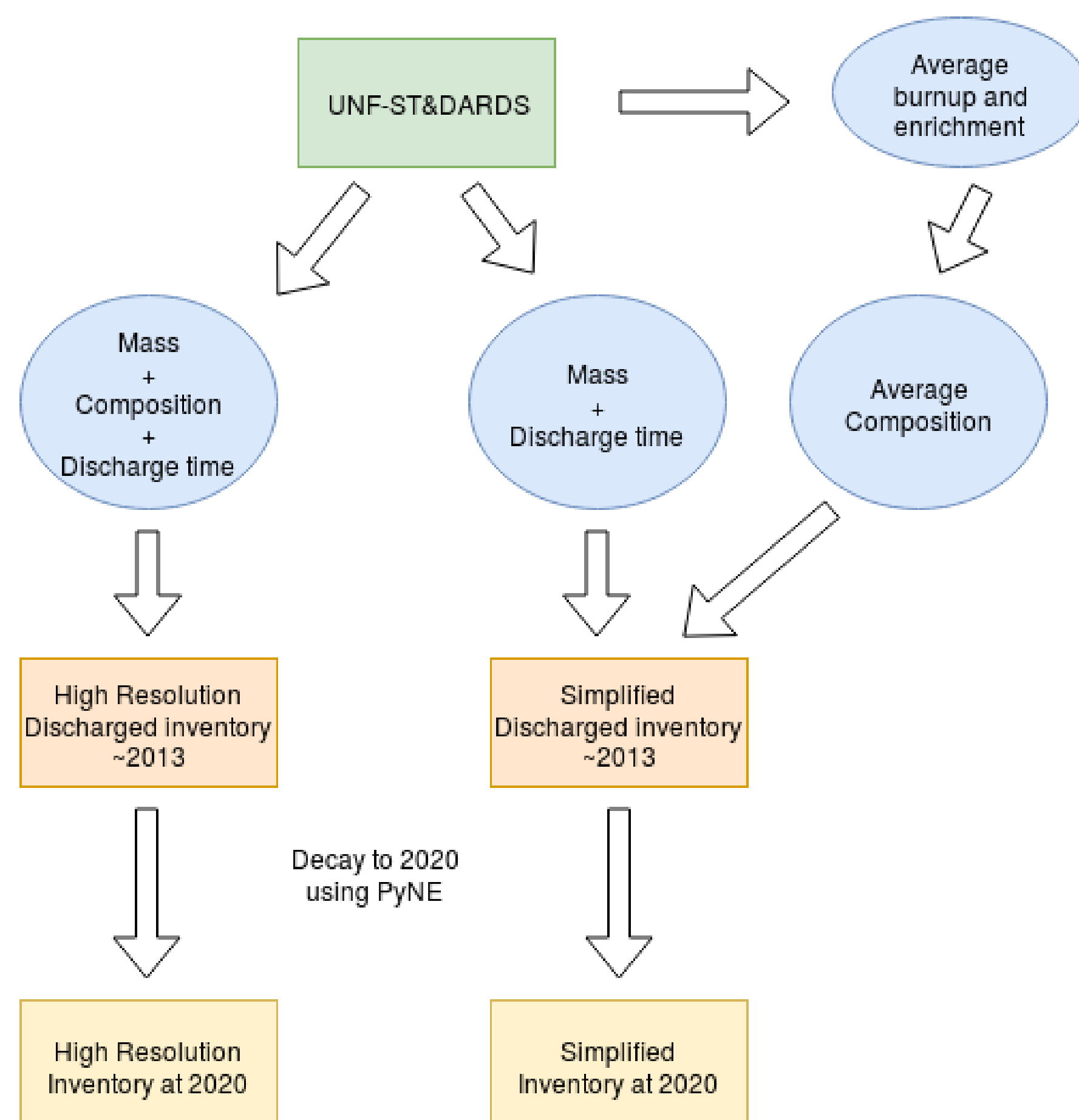


Figure: Workflow for generating two UNF inventories using UNF-ST&DARDS

Metrics

UNF is typically either destined for disposal (after storage) or re-processing. Accordingly, the U.S. UNF inventory can be analyzed in two different ways, with certain metrics important for each:

Analysis type	Important metric	Unit
Fuel cycle analysis	Equivalent Pu-239 [2]	t
Waste management	Decay heat	MW
	Activity	Bq

Table: Important metrics for UNF with regard to analysis types

The relative difference values are calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Rel. Error} = \frac{M_{HR} - M_S}{M_{HR}}$$

M_{HR} = Metric in inventory (high-resolution case)

M_S = Metric in inventory (simplified case)

Average Composition

The average assembly has:

- 36.169 GWD/MTHM burnup
- 3.39% ²³⁵U Enrichment

Isotope	wt %
²³⁸ U	96.5000
²³⁵ U	1.0400
²⁴¹ Am	0.0160
²³⁹ Pu	0.7550
¹³⁷ Cs	0.1320
⁹⁰ Sr	0.0552
Pu Total	1.2760

Table: Composition of the representative assembly selected for analysis.

PyNE and ORIGEN Decay Calculation Comparison

To ensure the validity of the decay function implemented in Python for Nuclear Engineering (PyNE), we imported the database into PyNE and decayed each assembly to 2020.

Metric	PyNE	ORIGEN	$\Delta\%$
²³⁹ Pu mass [t]	520.52	520.50	3.8E-05
¹³⁷ Cs mass [t]	59.23	59.19	6.7E-04
²³⁵ U mass [t]	771.42	771.39	3.8E-05
Total mass [t]	68,072	67,984	1.2E-03
Decay Heat [MW]	61.31	61.10	3.4E-03
Activity [Bq]	6.76e20	6.74e20	2.9E-03

Table: Comparison between PyNE decayed and ORIGEN decayed UNF inventory in 2020.

Isotopic Mass

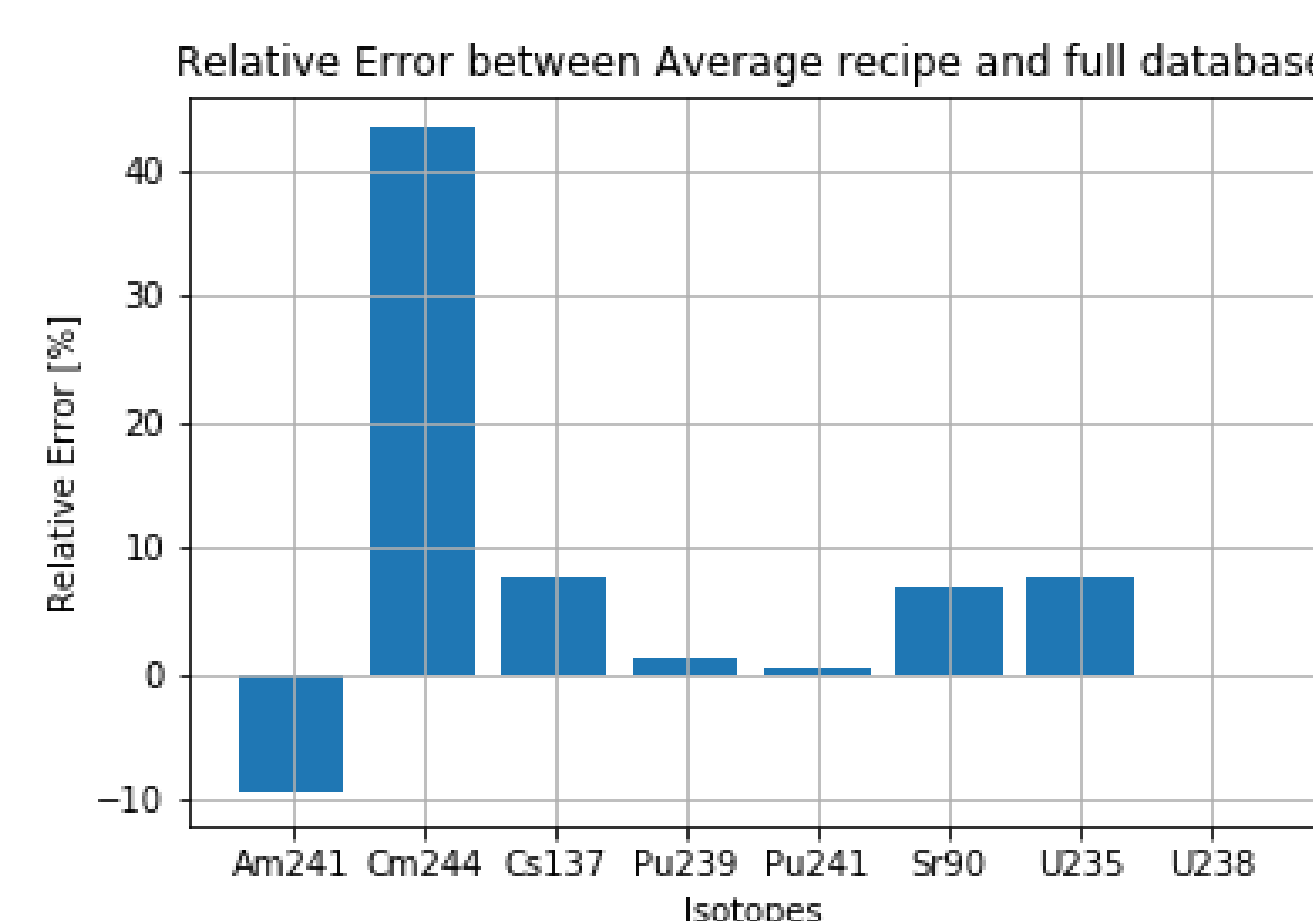


Figure: Relative error between high resolution and simplified case for different isotopes.

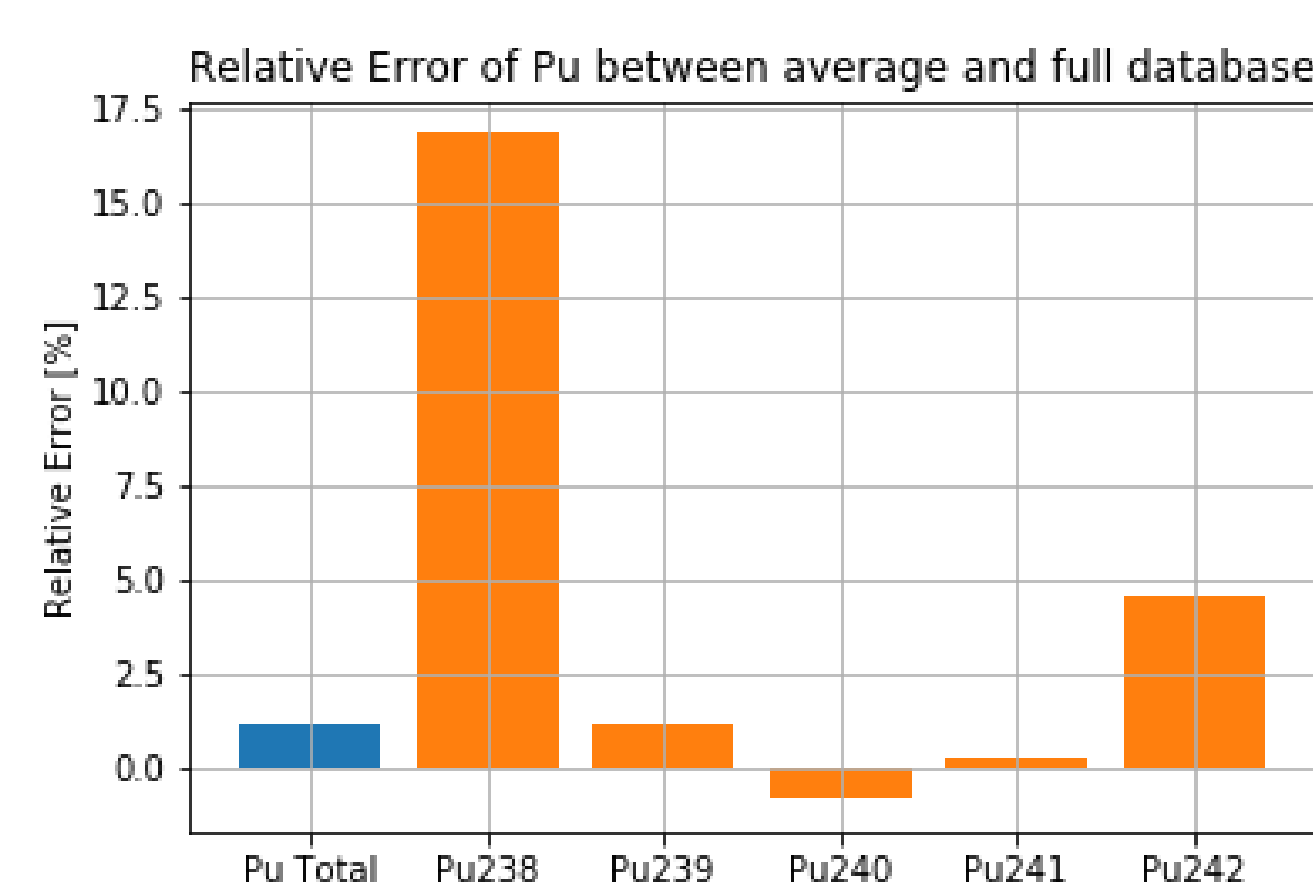


Figure: Relative error between high resolution and simplified case for plutonium isotopes.

Waste Management Metrics

The two major waste management metrics are radioactivity and decay heat. Since the two metrics change in time, the metrics are evaluated in time.

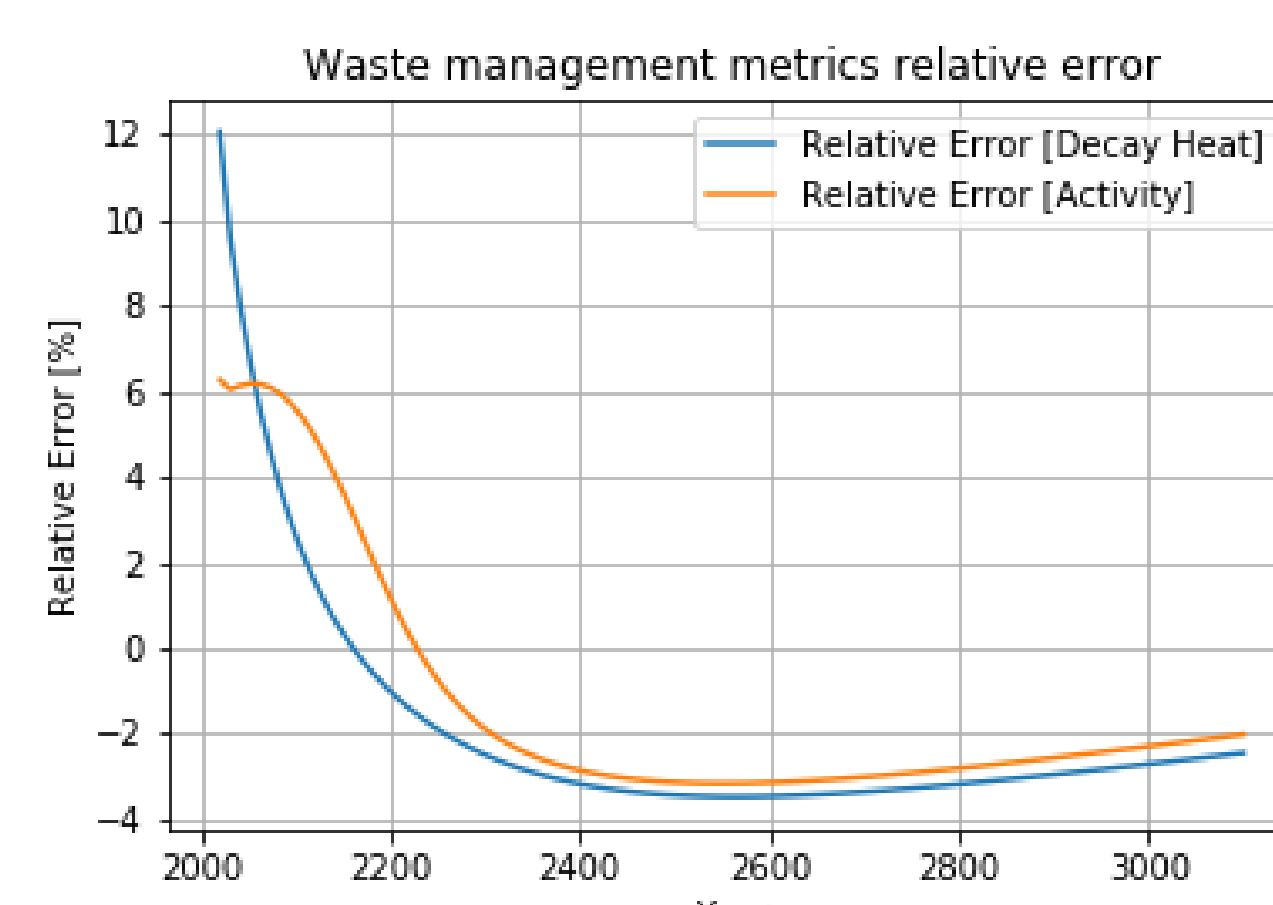


Figure: Relative error of activity and decay heat of the UNF inventory over time.

Fuel Cycle Analysis Metrics

Given the isotopic compositions of the UNF profile in 2020, we calculate the equivalent ²³⁹Pu for both cases, for both spectra.

Category	Equiv. ²³⁹ Pu ton	Rel. Error [%]
HR thermal	880.5	7.28
Simplified thermal	816.4	
HR fast	1214.0	4.67
Simplified fast	1157.3	

Table: Equivalent ²³⁹Pu ton value comparison for High-resolution and simplified case.

To explain this error, we plotted every assembly and its normalized equivalent ²³⁹Pu, shown in Figures 5 and 6.

$$\widetilde{^{239}\text{Pu}}_{equiv} = \frac{^{239}\text{Pu}_{equiv}}{M_{assem}}$$

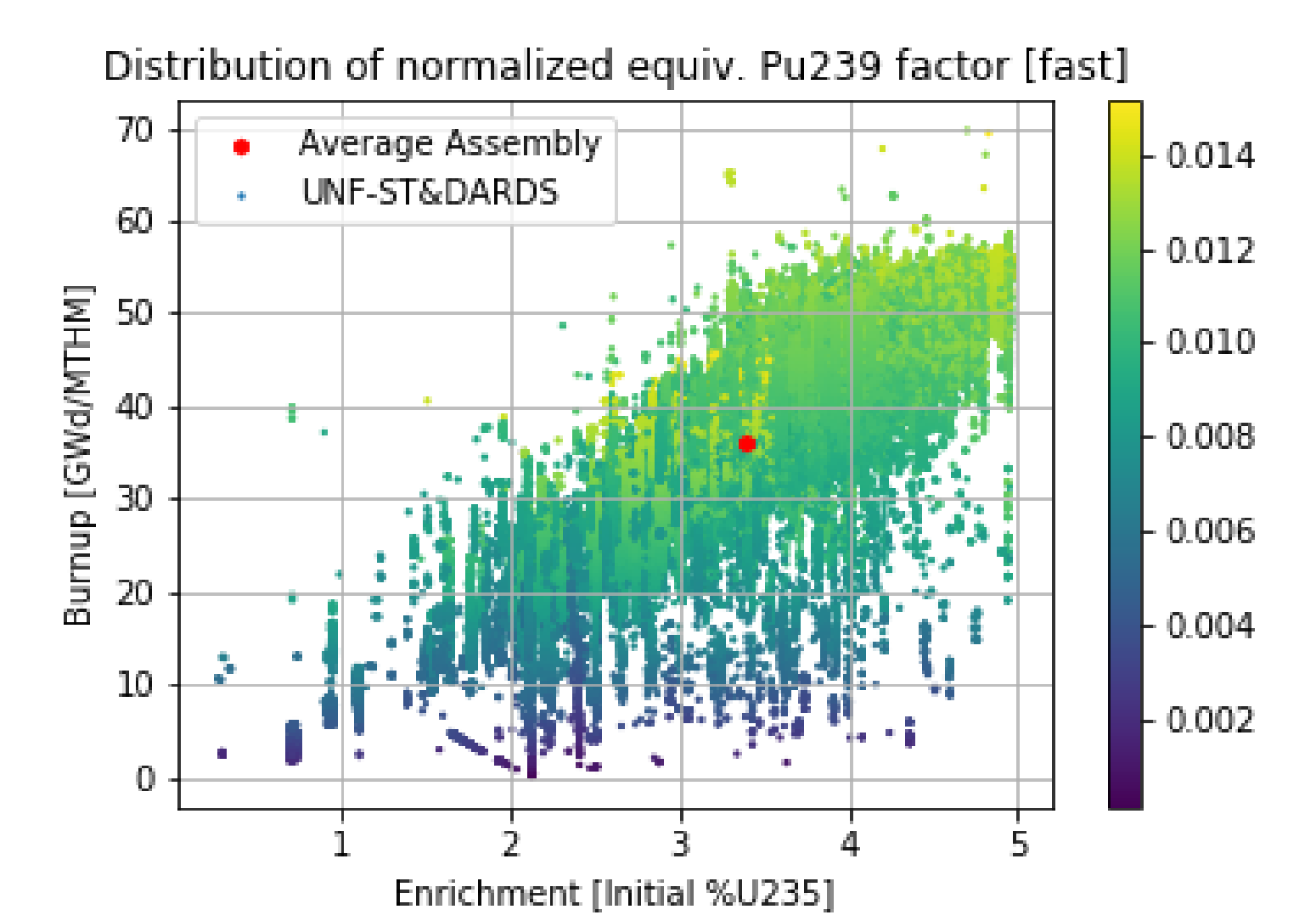


Figure: All assemblies in the database and their normalized equivalent Pu-239 in a fast reactor.

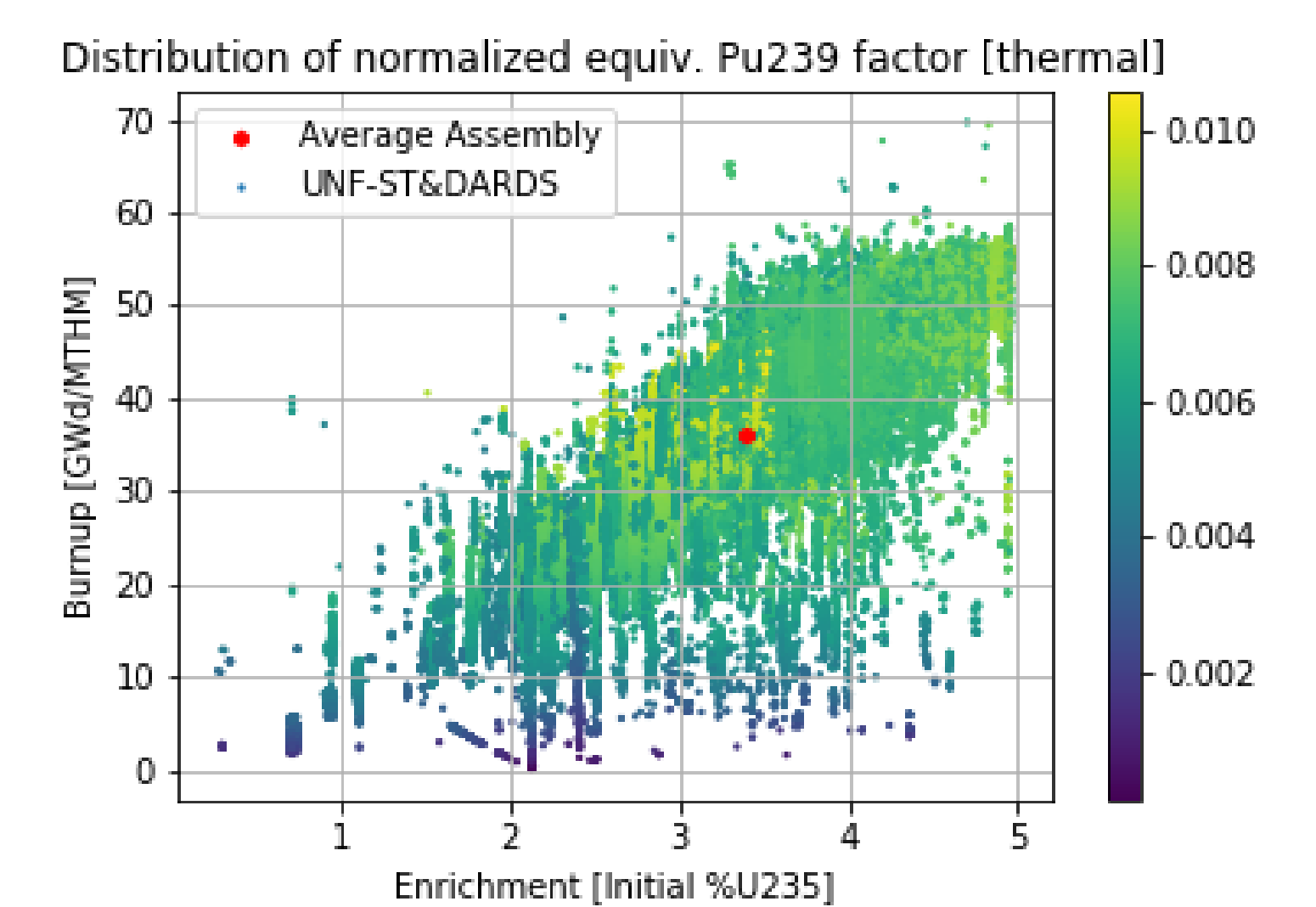


Figure: All assemblies in the database and their normalized equivalent Pu-239 in a thermal reactor.

Conclusion

Simplified inventory is **not adequate** for waste management analysis

- Large error in FP and MA inventory
 - FP and MA sensitive to initial enrichment and burnup
 - FP and MA contributor in decay heat and activity
- Discrete modeling for assemblies in repository modeling

Simplified inventory is **acceptable approximation** for fuel cycle analysis

- ~5% error for ²³⁹Pu_{equiv}
- Reduces computational burden for fuel cycle simulators

Acknowledgements

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