In-situ¹⁰Be in pyroxene

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Over the past decades, beryllium-10 has become the workhorse of the cosmogenic nuclides for geologic applications. One reason for this is the widespread occurrence of quartz (a key target mineral for ¹⁰Be) and its relatively straightforward chemistry. In-situ produced 10Be in quartz has been used globally to determine surface exposure, burial ages, and erosion rates across a wide swath of geologic and geomorphic settings.

The central North Island of New Zealand is home to the Taupo Volcanic Zone, a largely andesitic volcanic terrain that is home to Mt Ruapehu. The intermediate volcanic rocks of this region generally lack quartz with the result that little cosmogenic nuclide work has been done here. We have taken advantage of the ubiquitous presence of pyroxene in these rocks to test existing leaching protocols. Our results show that fine grained pyroxene can be successfully leached of the meteoric component, allowing reliable in-situ 10Be measurement.

Additionally, we measured ¹⁰Be concentrations in a well dated debris avalanche on the western flank of Mt Ruapehu in order to determine a local production rate for ¹⁰Be in pyroxene. Our best estimate for the ¹⁰Be production rate in pyroxene is 3.4 ± 0.8 atoms g ¹ y⁻¹ SLHL. This production rate is 8-27% lower than the empirically derived ¹⁰Be production rate in quartz.

The development of ¹⁰Be chemical procedures production rates in pyroxene allows and environments without quartz-bearing rocks to be dated using this widely used nuclide. Pairing ¹⁰Be with ³He in pyroxene would also open the door to burial dating or the determination of complex exposure histories.