PROCESS DESCRIPTION: SHELL AND TUBE HEAT EXCHANGER

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- **Author:** Coker Omowunmi Rebecca

1.0 Introduction

A shell and tube heat exchanger is a class of heat exchanger that is used to transfer heat between two fluids. It consists of a large cylindrical shell with a bundle of small tubes inside. This design provides a large surface area for heat transfer, making it highly effective and widely used in industries such as chemical processing, power generation, and refining.

2.0 Principle of Operation

The fundamental principle of a shell and tube heat exchanger is the transfer of thermal energy from a hotter fluid to a colder fluid without the two fluids mixing. One fluid flows through the small tubes (the **tube side**), while the other fluid flows around the outside of the tubes, inside the shell (the **shell side**). The heat is transferred through the wall of the tubes.

3.0 Key Components

1. **Shell:** The main outer cylindrical vessel that contains the tube bundle.
2. **Tube Bundle:** A collection of small-diameter tubes through which one of the fluids flows. These tubes can be arranged in various patterns (e.g., triangular or square pitch) to optimize heat transfer.
3. **Baffles:** Plates placed perpendicularly inside the shell to support the tubes and direct the flow of the shell-side fluid. They increase turbulence and heat transfer efficiency.
4. **Tube Sheets:** Two flat plates at each end of the shell that hold the tubes in place and separate the shell-side fluid from the tube-side fluid.
5. **Nozzles:** Inlet and outlet ports for the fluids on both the shell and tube sides.

4.0 Fluid Flow Paths

The fluids typically flow in one of two arrangements:

- **Counter-current Flow:** The hot and cold fluids enter from opposite ends of the

heat exchanger and flow in opposite directions. This is the most efficient configuration, as it allows for a higher overall temperature difference and maximizes heat transfer.
- **Co-current Flow:** The hot and cold fluids enter from the same end and flow in the same direction. This arrangement is less common due to lower heat transfer efficiency.

In a typical cooling application, the hot process fluid would flow through the shell side, while the colder utility fluid (like cooling water) would flow through the tubes. Baffles would direct the cooling water flow across the tubes, increasing the heat exchange rate.

5.0 Application

A common application is cooling a hot process stream from a reactor before it proceeds to the next stage of production. The hot stream is passed through the shell, and cooling water is circulated through the tubes, effectively lowering the stream's temperature to a desired setpoint.