

HELIUM NANODROPLET ISOLATION SPECTROSCOPY AND AB INITIO CALCULATIONS OF HO₃-(O₂)_N CLUSTERS (N=0-4)

T. LIANG, P. RASTON, and G. E. DOUBERLY, *Department of Chemistry, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602, USA.*

The HOOO hydrotrioxygen radical and its deuterated analog (DOOO) have been isolated in helium nanodroplets following the *in-situ* association reaction between OH and O₂. The infrared spectrum in the 3500-3700 cm⁻¹ region reveals bands that are assigned to the ν_1 (OH stretch) fundamental and $\nu_1 + \nu_6$ (OH stretch plus torsion) combination band of the *trans*-HOOO isomer. The helium droplet spectrum is assigned on the basis of a detailed comparison to the infrared spectrum of HOOO produced in the gas phase [E. L. Derro, T. D. Sechler, C. Murray, and M. I. Lester, *J. Chem. Phys.* **128**, 244313 (2008)]. Despite the characteristic low temperature and rapid cooling of helium nanodroplets, there is no evidence for the formation of a weakly bound OH-O₂ van der Waals complex, which implies the absence of a kinetically significant barrier in the entrance channel of the reaction. There is also no spectroscopic evidence for the formation of *cis*-HOOO, which is predicted by theory to be nearly isoenergetic to the *trans* isomer. Stark spectroscopy of the *trans*-HOOO species provides vibrationally averaged dipole moment components that qualitatively disagree with predictions obtained from CCSD(T) computations at the equilibrium, planar geometry, indicating a floppy complex undergoing large-amplitude motion about the torsional coordinate. Under conditions that favor the introduction of multiple O₂ molecules to the droplets, bands associated with larger H/DOOO-(O₂)_n clusters are observed shifted 1-10 cm⁻¹ to the red of the *trans*-H/DOOO ν_1 bands. Detailed *ab initio* calculations are carried out for multiple isomers of *cis*- and *trans*-HO₃-O₂, corresponding to either hydrogen or oxygen bonded van der Waals complexes. Comparisons to theory suggest that the structure of the HO₃-O₂ complex formed in helium droplets is a hydrogen-bonded ⁴A' species consisting of a *trans*-HO₃ core. The computed binding energy of the complex is approximately 240 cm⁻¹. Despite the weak interaction between *trans*-HO₃ and O₂, non-additive red shifts of the OH stretch frequency are observed upon successive solvation by O₂ to form the larger clusters with $n > 1$.