

Turbulent Flow Through a Shell-and-Tube Heat Exchanger Cross Section

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Introduction

This example describes a part of a shell-and-tube heat exchanger (see Figure 1), where hot water enters from above. The cooling medium, commonly water, flows through the pipes and enters from the side. The tubes are assumed to be made of stainless steel.

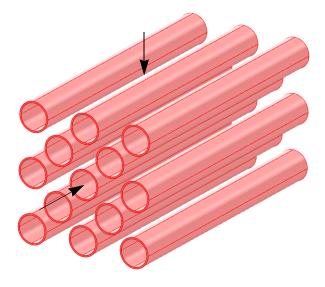


Figure 1: A tube bundle from a shell-and-tube heat exchanger. The arrows indicate the flow directions.

Assuming that the cooling water is in abundant supply, the flow through the pipes has a constant temperature. Under that assumption, you can model this heat exchanger by a 2D model as shown in Figure 2, and the corresponding 2D domain appears in Figure 3. Note that the pipe interiors are not part of the domain because the model assumes the temperature to be constant there.

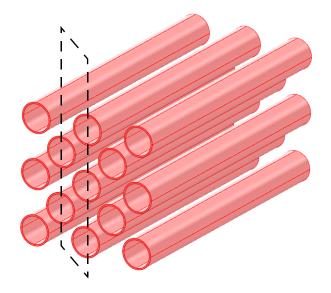


Figure 2: The dashed line marks the model region, which is shown in Figure 3.

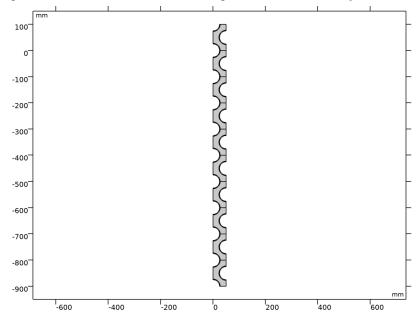


Figure 3: The modeled 2D region.

THE NEED FOR A TURBULENCE MODEL

An important characteristic of the flow is the Reynolds number, Re, defined as

Re =
$$\frac{UL}{\eta}$$

where U is a velocity scale, L is a length scale, and η is a kinematic viscosity. If the Reynolds number is low, no turbulence model is needed. If, on the other hand, the Reynolds number is high, then the flow is dominated by convection, and a turbulence model is necessary.

In this case, a suitable velocity scale is the mean inlet velocity, which is 1.5 m/s, and L is set to the pipe radius. Then, using standard values for water for the density and viscosity, the equation gives an approximate Reynolds number of 75,000, which is high enough to warrant the use of a turbulence model (see Ref. 1 for more information on flow regimes for different Reynolds numbers).

The following example demonstrates how to model a coupled fluid-thermal interaction problem with COMSOL Multiphysics, using the Nonisothermal Flow multiphysics coupling.

Model Definition

SOLID AND FLUID HEAT TRANSFER — **INCLUDING THE FLUID DYNAMICS** The governing equations in this model are (Ref. 2–Ref. 4)

- The Reynolds-Averaged Navier–Stokes (RANS) equations and a k-ε turbulence model.
- Heat transport equations in the water and the solid (steel) tube walls.

The Nonisothermal Flow multiphysics coupling sets up both sets of equations together with the applicable couplings, making it easy to model the fluid-thermal interaction.

The model uses temperature-dependent properties for water and steel from the built-in material library. It incorporates the influence of the turbulent fluctuations on the temperature field by using the Kays–Crawford model for the turbulent Prandtl number (for details, see the section *Turbulent Nonisothermal Flow Theory* in the *Heat Transfer Module User's Guide*). Furthermore, to account for the effect of mixing due to eddies, it is necessary to correct the fluid's thermal conductivity. The turbulence results in an effective thermal conductivity, k_{eff} , according to the equation

$$k_{\text{eff}} = k + \kappa_{\text{T}}$$
 $\kappa_{\text{T}} = \frac{C_p \mu_{\text{T}}}{P r_{\text{T}}}$

where k is the fluid's physical thermal conductivity and $\kappa_{\rm T}$ is the turbulent thermal conductivity. Furthermore, $\mu_{\rm T}$ denotes the turbulent dynamic viscosity, C_p is the heat capacity, and $\Pr_{\rm T}$ refers to the turbulent Prandtl number. Be careful not to confuse k in the meaning of thermal conductivity with k in the meaning of turbulent kinetic energy.

The boundary conditions for the problem are:

- *k*-ε equations in the fluid domain:
 - Specified initial velocity
 - Symmetry at the region borders
 - Wall function at the pipe/water interfaces
 - Fixed outlet pressure
- Heat transport equations:
 - Fixed temperature at the inlet
 - Convection-dominated transport at the outlet
 - Symmetry (thermal insulation) at the region borders
 - Thermal wall function at the pipe/water interfaces
 - Fixed temperature at the inner pipe surfaces

Figure 4 shows the velocity in the inlet of several segments in the middle of the computational domain. The flow field is periodic in the y direction with the constant pressure drop of about 1350 Pa. (Figure 5).

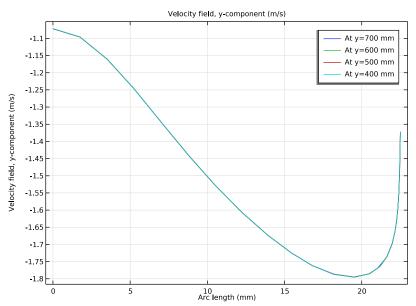


Figure 4: Velocity at y = 400, 500, 600, and 700 mm.

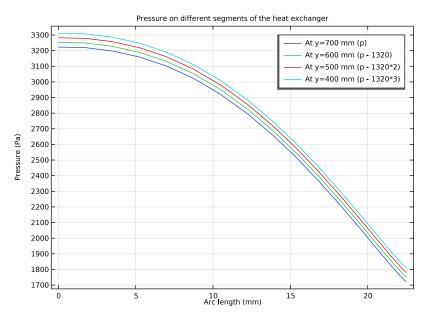


Figure 5: Pressure at y = 400, 500, 600, and 700 mm.

Figure 6 depicts the temperature distribution and velocity streamlines in the segment. The heat transfer is strongly influenced by the details of the velocity field. Observe the low-temperature zones behind the pipes created by the recirculation zones.

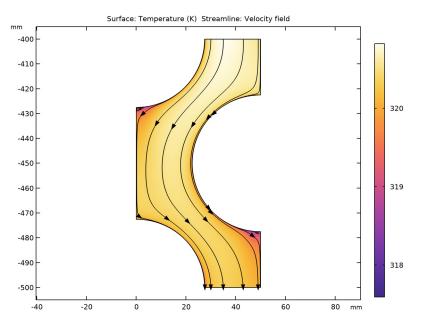


Figure 7 shows the temperature profiles at y = 400, 500, 600, and 700 mm.

Figure 6: Temperature distribution in the segment.

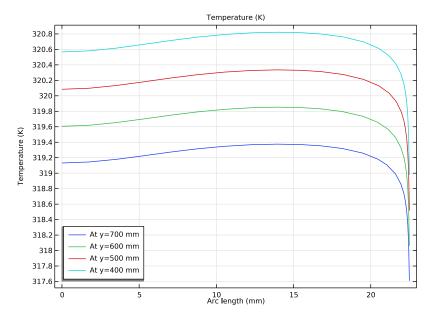


Figure 7: Temperature distribution at y = 400, 500, 600, and 700 mm.

You start by performing an initial calculation for the single segment of the computational domain (Figure 8). Proceed by creating a linear array of the segments. The appropriate physical interface settings are automatically extended to all elements of the array.

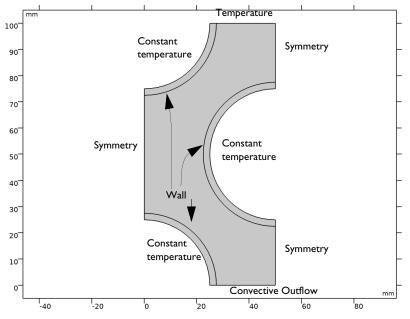


Figure 8: Modeled segment of the heat exchanger with boundary conditions.

References

1. J.R. Welty, C.E. Wicks, and R.E. Wilson, *Fundamentals of Momentum, Heat and Mass Transfer*, 3rd ed, John Wiley & Sons, 1984.

2. B.E. Launder and D.B. Spalding, "The Numerical Computation of Turbulent Flows," *Computer Methods in Applied Mechanics*, vol. 3, pp. 269–289, 1974.

3. D.C. Wilcox, Turbulence Modeling for CFD, 2nd ed, DCW Industries, 2000.

4. H.K. Versteeg and W. Malalasekera, *An Introduction to Computational Fluid Dynamics*, Prentice Hall, 1995.

Application Library path: Heat_Transfer_Module/Heat_Exchangers/ turbulent_heat_exchanger

Modeling Instructions

From the File menu, choose New.

NEW

In the New window, click 🔗 Model Wizard.

MODEL WIZARD

- I In the Model Wizard window, click **2D**.
- 2 In the Select Physics tree, select Fluid Flow>Nonisothermal Flow>Turbulent Flow> Turbulent Flow, k-ε.
- 3 Click Add.
- 4 Click 🔿 Study.

In this model, the flow will be considered nearly incompressible and independent of temperature variations. Under these assumptions, the **Stationary**, **One-Way NITF** study performs best.

- 5 In the Select Study tree, select Preset Studies for Selected Multiphysics>Stationary, One-Way NITF.
- 6 Click 🗹 Done.

GLOBAL DEFINITIONS

Parameters 1

- I In the Model Builder window, under Global Definitions click Parameters I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Parameters, locate the Parameters section.
- **3** In the table, enter the following settings:

Name	Expression	Value	Description	
T_in	323[K]	323 K	Inflow temperature	
T_pipe	278[K]	278 K	Pipe temperature	
v_in	-1.5[m/s]	-1.5 m/s	Inflow velocity	

GEOMETRY I

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) click Geometry I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Geometry, locate the Units section.
- 3 From the Length unit list, choose mm.

Now draw the segment of the heat exchanger that forms the model geometry for the first simulation.

Rectangle 1 (r1)

- I In the Geometry toolbar, click Rectangle.
- 2 In the Settings window for Rectangle, locate the Size and Shape section.
- 3 In the Width text field, type 50.
- **4** In the **Height** text field, type 100.
- 5 Click 📄 Build Selected.

Circle I (c1)

- I In the **Geometry** toolbar, click \bigcirc **Circle**.
- 2 In the Settings window for Circle, locate the Size and Shape section.
- 3 In the Radius text field, type 27.5.
- 4 Click 틤 Build Selected.

Circle 2 (c2)

- I In the **Geometry** toolbar, click Circle.
- 2 In the Settings window for Circle, locate the Size and Shape section.
- 3 In the Radius text field, type 25.
- 4 Click 틤 Build Selected.

Difference I (dif1)

- I In the Geometry toolbar, click 🔲 Booleans and Partitions and choose Difference.
- 2 Select the object **cl** only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Difference, locate the Difference section.
- 4 Click to select the Del Activate Selection toggle button for Objects to subtract.
- **5** Select the object **c2** only.
- 6 Click 틤 Build Selected.

Copy I (copyI)

I In the Geometry toolbar, click 💭 Transforms and choose Copy.

- 2 Select the object difl only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Copy, locate the Displacement section.
- **4** In the **x** text field, type 0 50.
- **5** In the **y** text field, type 100 **50**.
- 6 Click 틤 Build Selected.

Union I (uni I)

- I In the Geometry toolbar, click 🔲 Booleans and Partitions and choose Union.
- 2 Click in the Graphics window and then press Ctrl+A to select all objects.
- 3 In the Settings window for Union, click 📳 Build Selected.

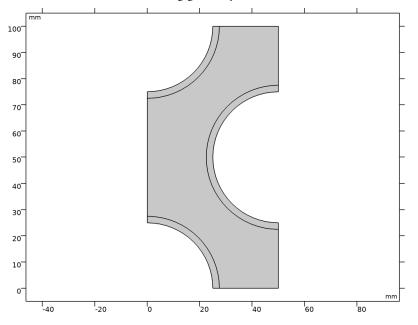
Delete Entities I (dell)

- I In the Model Builder window, right-click Geometry I and choose Delete Entities.
- 2 In the Settings window for Delete Entities, locate the Entities or Objects to Delete section.
- 3 From the Geometric entity level list, choose Domain.
- 4 On the object unil, select Domains 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, and 10 only.

It might be easier to select the domains by using the **Selection List** window. To open this window, in the **Home** toolbar click **Windows** and choose **Selection List**. (If you are running the cross-platform desktop, you find **Windows** in the main menu.)

5 In the Geometry toolbar, click 🟢 Build All.

You should now see the following geometry.



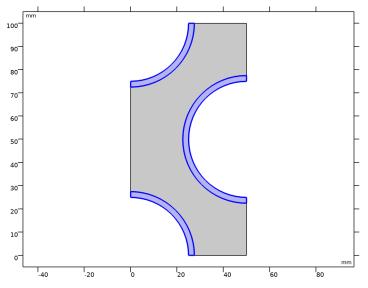
ADD MATERIAL

- I In the Home toolbar, click 🙀 Add Material to open the Add Material window.
- 2 Go to the Add Material window.
- 3 In the tree, select Built-in>Steel AISI 4340.
- 4 Click Add to Component in the window toolbar.
- 5 In the tree, select Built-in>Water, liquid.
- 6 Click Add to Component in the window toolbar.
- 7 In the Home toolbar, click 🙀 Add Material to close the Add Material window.

MATERIALS

Steel AISI 4340 (mat1)

I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl)>Materials click Steel AISI 4340 (matl). 2 Select Domains 1, 3, and 4 only.



Water, liquid (mat2)

- I In the Model Builder window, click Water, liquid (mat2).
- **2** Select Domain 2 only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Material, locate the Geometric Entity Selection section.
- 4 Click 🐚 Create Selection.
- 5 In the Create Selection dialog box, type Water in the Selection name text field.
- 6 Click OK.

HEAT TRANSFER IN FLUIDS (HT)

Set the reference temperature to an estimated value of T_in where the flow operates.

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) click Heat Transfer in Fluids (ht).
- 2 In the Settings window for Heat Transfer in Fluids, locate the Physical Model section.
- **3** In the T_{ref} text field, type T_in.

Solid I

- I In the Physics toolbar, click **Domains** and choose Solid.
- 2 Select Domains 1, 3, and 4 only.

TURBULENT FLOW, $K-\varepsilon$ (SPF)

The density variations are small enough to consider the fluid as incompressible. Change the compressibility option accordingly in the physics interface. The reference temperature is set in the Heat Transfer interface.

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) click Turbulent Flow, k- ε (spf).
- 2 In the Settings window for Turbulent Flow, k-ε, locate the Physical Model section.
- **3** From the **Compressibility** list, choose **Incompressible** flow.
- 4 Locate the Domain Selection section. From the Selection list, choose Water.

Inlet 1

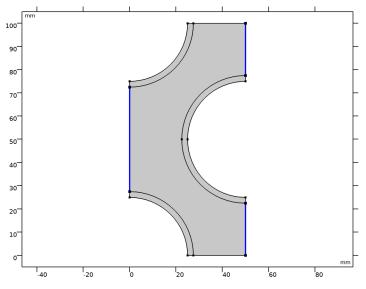
- I In the Physics toolbar, click Boundaries and choose Inlet.
- **2** Select Boundary 7 only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Inlet, locate the Velocity section.
- **4** Click the **Velocity field** button.
- **5** Specify the **u**₀ vector as

0	x
v_in	у

Symmetry I

I In the **Physics** toolbar, click — **Boundaries** and choose **Symmetry**.

2 Select Boundaries 2, 8, and 11 only.



Outlet I

- I In the Physics toolbar, click Boundaries and choose Outlet.
- **2** Select Boundary 6 only.

HEAT TRANSFER IN FLUIDS (HT)

In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) click Heat Transfer in Fluids (ht).

Inflow I

- I In the Physics toolbar, click Boundaries and choose Inflow.
- **2** Select Boundary 7 only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Inflow, locate the Upstream Properties section.
- **4** In the T_{ustr} text field, type T_in.

Outflow I

- I In the Physics toolbar, click Boundaries and choose Outflow.
- **2** Select Boundary 6 only.

Temperature I

- I In the Physics toolbar, click Boundaries and choose Temperature.
- 2 Select Boundaries 12, 15, 18, and 19 only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Temperature, locate the Temperature section.

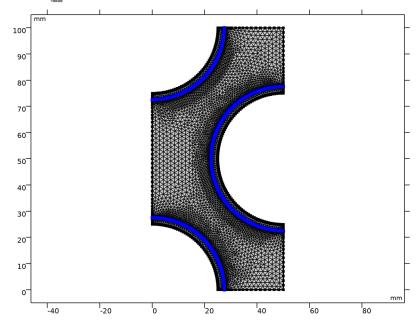
4 In the T_0 text field, type T_pipe.

MESH I

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) click Mesh I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Mesh, locate the Physics-Controlled Mesh section.
- **3** From the **Element size** list, choose **Fine**.
- 4 Right-click Component I (comp1)>Mesh I and choose Edit Physics-Induced Sequence.

Size 2

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl)>Mesh I click Size 2.
- 2 In the Settings window for Size, locate the Element Size section.
- 3 Click the **Custom** button.
- 4 Locate the Element Size Parameters section.
- 5 Select the Maximum element size check box. In the associated text field, type 0.5.



6 Click 🔳 Build All.

STUDY I

Solve the problem for a single heat exchanger segment.

I In the Home toolbar, click **=** Compute.

RESULTS

Velocity (spf)

The default plots show the velocity, the wall resolution, and the temperature distribution in the segment.

GEOMETRY I

Continue with creating the array of the elements.

Array I (arr1)

- I In the Geometry toolbar, click 💭 Transforms and choose Array.
- 2 Select the object **dell** only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Array, locate the Size section.
- 4 From the Array type list, choose Linear.
- **5** In the **Size** text field, type **10**.
- 6 Locate the **Displacement** section. In the **y** text field, type -100.
- 7 In the Geometry toolbar, click 📗 Build All.

8 Click the **Zoom Extents** button in the **Graphics** toolbar.

100 0 -100 -200 -300 -400 -500 -600 -700 -800 -900 mn -600 -400 -200 6 200 400 600

You should now see the following geometry:

COMSOL Multiphysics automatically extends the material properties, meshes, and physical interface settings to all segments of the exchanger.

STUDY I

In the **Home** toolbar, click **= Compute**.

RESULTS

Default Plot Groups

Default plots are generated for the velocity magnitude, pressure, boundary wall resolution, and temperature.

Proceed as follows to plot the *y*-velocity component for a few segments in the middle of the computational domain (Figure 4).

Velocity Along Arc Length

- I In the Home toolbar, click 🚛 Add Plot Group and choose ID Plot Group.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, type Velocity Along Arc Length in the Label text field.

- 3 Click to expand the Title section. From the Title type list, choose Manual.
- 4 In the Title text area, type Velocity field, y-component (m/s).

Line Graph I

- I In the Velocity Along Arc Length toolbar, click 📐 Line Graph.
- 2 Click the **Zoom Extents** button in the **Graphics** toolbar.
- **3** Select Boundary 44 only.
- 4 In the Settings window for Line Graph, click Replace Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-Axis Data section. From the menu, choose Component I (compl)>
 Turbulent Flow, k-ε>Velocity and pressure>Velocity field m/s>v Velocity field, y-component.
- 5 Click to expand the Legends section. Select the Show legends check box.
- 6 From the Legends list, choose Manual.
- 7 In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

At y=700 mm

8 In the Velocity Along Arc Length toolbar, click 🗿 Plot.

9 Right-click Line Graph I and choose Duplicate.

Line Graph 2

- I In the Model Builder window, click Line Graph 2.
- 2 In the Settings window for Line Graph, locate the Selection section.
- 3 Click Clear Selection.
- 4 Select Boundary 45 only.

5 Locate the Legends section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

At y=600 mm

6 In the Velocity Along Arc Length toolbar, click 💿 Plot.

Line Graph 3 and Line Graph 4

Create two more line graphs by repeating the steps for Line Graph 2, except select boundaries 46 and 47, respectively.

Velocity Along Arc Length

From Figure 4 it is evident that the flow field is periodic in the *y* direction. The pressure drop on the segment is about 1350 Pa. To plot the pressure distribution (Figure 5), proceed as follows.

I In the Model Builder window, right-click Velocity Along Arc Length and choose Duplicate.

Pressure Along Arc Length

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results click Velocity Along Arc Length I.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, type Pressure Along Arc Length in the Label text field.
- 3 Locate the **Title** section. In the **Title** text area, type Pressure on different segments of the heat exchanger.
- 4 Locate the Plot Settings section.
- 5 Select the y-axis label check box. In the associated text field, type Pressure (Pa).

Line Graph 1

- I In the Model Builder window, expand the Pressure Along Arc Length node, then click Line Graph I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Line Graph, click Replace Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-Axis Data section. From the menu, choose Component I (compl)> Turbulent Flow, k-ε>Velocity and pressure>p Pressure Pa.
- **3** Locate the **Legends** section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

At y=700 mm (p)

Line Graph 2

- 2 In the Settings window for Line Graph, locate the y-Axis Data section.
- 3 In the Expression text field, type p-1320.
- **4** Locate the **Legends** section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

At y=600 mm (p - 1320)

Line Graph 3

I In the Model Builder window, click Line Graph 3.

2 In the Settings window for Line Graph, locate the y-Axis Data section.

I In the Model Builder window, click Line Graph 2.

- **3** In the **Expression** text field, type p-1320*2.
- 4 Locate the Legends section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

At y=500 mm (p - 1320*2)

Line Graph 4

- I In the Model Builder window, click Line Graph 4.
- 2 In the Settings window for Line Graph, locate the y-Axis Data section.
- 3 In the **Expression** text field, type p-1320*3.
- 4 Locate the Legends section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

At y=400 mm (p - 1320*3)

5 In the Pressure Along Arc Length toolbar, click 💿 Plot.

To reproduce Figure 6, add the velocity streamlines to the temperature plot.

Study I/Solution I (3) (soll)

In the **Results** toolbar, click **More Datasets** and choose **Solution**.

Selection

- I Right-click Study I/Solution I (3) (soll) and choose Selection.
- **2** Click the **Zoom Extents** button in the **Graphics** toolbar.
- 3 In the Settings window for Selection, locate the Geometric Entity Selection section.
- 4 From the Geometric entity level list, choose Domain.
- **5** Select Domain 14 only.

Temperature (ht)

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results click Temperature (ht).
- 2 In the Settings window for 2D Plot Group, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Dataset list, choose Study I/Solution I (3) (soll).
- **4** In the **Temperature (ht)** toolbar, click **O** Plot.
- **5** Click the **Com Extents** button in the **Graphics** toolbar.

Streamline 1

- I In the Temperature (ht) toolbar, click 😻 Streamline.
- 2 In the Settings window for Streamline, locate the Streamline Positioning section.

- **3** From the **Positioning** list, choose **Starting-point controlled**.
- 4 From the Entry method list, choose Coordinates.
- 5 In the x text field, type 0.2 1.9 27.6 30 35 43 49 48 47.
- 6 In the y text field, type 429 428 500 500 500 500 500 478 479.3.
- 7 Locate the Coloring and Style section. Find the Point style subsection. From the Type list, choose Arrow.
- 8 Select the Number of arrows check box. In the associated text field, type 30.
- 9 In the Temperature (ht) toolbar, click 💿 Plot.

Finally, plot the temperature on boundaries 45–48 (Figure 7).

Velocity Along Arc Length

In the Model Builder window, under Results right-click Velocity Along Arc Length and choose Duplicate.

Temperature Along Arc Length

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results click Velocity Along Arc Length I.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, type Temperature Along Arc Length in the Label text field.
- **3** Locate the **Title** section. In the **Title** text area, type **Temperature** (K).
- 4 Locate the Legend section. From the Position list, choose Lower left.

Line Graph 1

- I In the Model Builder window, expand the Temperature Along Arc Length node, then click Line Graph I.
- In the Settings window for Line Graph, click Replace Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-Axis Data section. From the menu, choose Component I (compl)>
 Heat Transfer in Fluids>Temperature>T Temperature K.

Line Graph 2-Line Graph 4

Repeat the steps in the previous section for Line Graph 2 through Line Graph 4.

To create a 3D plot of the temperature through the steel pipes and the velocity streamlines in the water, follow the instructions below.

Mirror 2D I

- I In the **Results** toolbar, click **More Datasets** and choose **Mirror 2D**.
- 2 In the Settings window for Mirror 2D, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Dataset list, choose Study I/Solution I (3) (sol1).

- 4 Locate the Axis Data section. In row Point I, set x to 50.
- **5** In row **Point 2**, set **x** to **50**.

Extrusion 2D 1

- I In the **Results** toolbar, click **More Datasets** and choose **Extrusion 2D**.
- 2 In the Settings window for Extrusion 2D, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Dataset list, choose Mirror 2D I.
- 4 Locate the Extrusion section. In the z maximum text field, type 100.

Study I/Solution I (4) (soll)

In the **Results** toolbar, click **More Datasets** and choose **Solution**.

Selection

- I Right-click Study I/Solution I (4) (soll) and choose Selection.
- **2** Click the **Zoom Extents** button in the **Graphics** toolbar.
- 3 In the Settings window for Selection, locate the Geometric Entity Selection section.
- 4 From the Geometric entity level list, choose Domain.
- **5** Select Domains 15 and 35 only.

Extrusion 2D I, Mirror 2D I

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results>Datasets, Ctrl-click to select Mirror 2D I and Extrusion 2D I.
- 2 Right-click and choose Duplicate.

Mirror 2D 2

- I In the Model Builder window, click Mirror 2D 2.
- 2 In the Settings window for Mirror 2D, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Dataset list, choose Study I/Solution I (4) (sol1).

Extrusion 2D 2

- I In the Model Builder window, click Extrusion 2D 2.
- 2 In the Settings window for Extrusion 2D, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Dataset list, choose Mirror 2D 2.

Velocity and Temperature 3D

- I In the Results toolbar, click 间 3D Plot Group.
- 2 In the Settings window for 3D Plot Group, type Velocity and Temperature 3D in the Label text field.

3 Locate the Plot Settings section. Clear the Plot dataset edges check box.

Surface 1

- I Right-click Velocity and Temperature 3D and choose Surface.
- 2 In the Settings window for Surface, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Dataset list, choose Extrusion 2D 2.
- **4** Locate the **Expression** section. In the **Expression** text field, type T.
- **5** Locate the **Coloring and Style** section. Click **Change Color Table**.
- 6 In the Color Table dialog box, select Thermal>HeatCameraLight in the tree.
- 7 Click OK.

Streamline 1

- I In the Model Builder window, right-click Velocity and Temperature 3D and choose Streamline.
- 2 In the Settings window for Streamline, locate the Expression section.
- 3 Select the Description check box. In the associated text field, type Velocity field (m/s).
- 4 Locate the Streamline Positioning section. From the Positioning list, choose Magnitude controlled.
- **5** In the **Minimum distance** text field, type **0.1**.
- 6 In the Maximum distance text field, type 0.3.
- 7 Locate the Coloring and Style section. Find the Line style subsection. From the Type list, choose Tube.
- 8 Select the Radius scale factor check box.
- 9 In the Tube radius expression text field, type 0.7.
- **IO** Find the **Point style** subsection. From the **Type** list, choose **Arrow**.
- II From the Arrow distribution list, choose Equal inverse time.

Color Expression 1

- I Right-click Streamline I and choose Color Expression.
- 2 In the Velocity and Temperature 3D toolbar, click 🗿 Plot.