

## Dynamic Structural Flexibility of Fe-MOF-5 Evidenced by $^{57}\text{Fe}$ Mössbauer Spectroscopy

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Temperature-dependent  $^{57}\text{Fe}$  Mössbauer spectra were collected on  $\text{Fe}_x\text{Zn}_{4-x}(1,4\text{-benzenedicarboxylate})_3$  (Fe-MOF-5). When measured under an Ar atmosphere, the data at higher temperatures reveal thermal population of the lowest-lying electronic excited state, as expected for low symmetry tetrahedral ferrous ions. In the presence of  $\text{N}_2$ , however, the temperature-dependence becomes exaggerated and the spectra cannot be fitted to a single species. A fluctuating electric field gradient at the Fe nuclei best explain these data and suggest dynamic structural distortions induced by weak interaction with  $\text{N}_2$ . This direct evidence for dynamic behaviour at MOF open metal sites is relevant for the use of MOF SBUs in catalysis, gas separation, and other applications that invoke similar phenomena.

*In honor of Professor Mercuri G. Kanatzidis*

### Introduction

The use of metal-organic frameworks (MOFs) for heterogeneous catalysis,<sup>1,2</sup> gas storage<sup>3</sup> and separation,<sup>4</sup> and detection of small molecules<sup>5</sup> often relies on dynamic binding of substrates to open metal sites.<sup>6</sup> Tuning the MOF properties for such applications is achieved by altering the composition of the molecular subunits and studying the resulting metal-substrate interactions with site-isolated precision. These interactions are intriguing because they can involve unconventional, albeit weak, bonding, such as between saturated hydrocarbons and high-spin metal centers,<sup>4</sup> and often require geometrical transformations to metal ion coordination spheres while maintaining structural integrity. Evidence for unconventional bonding and distortions to MOF metal sites typically lacks insight into the dynamic nature of the interactions, however. Here, we present temperature-dependent  $^{57}\text{Fe}$  Mössbauer spectra as evidence for dynamic structural distortions at Fe sites in  $\text{Fe}_x\text{Zn}_{4-x}(1,4\text{-benzenedicarboxylate})_3$  caused by weak interactions with  $\text{N}_2$ .

The family of materials known as M-MOF-5 has been useful in studying fundamental aspects of interactions between small molecules and open metal sites of MOFs. Synthesized by cation exchange of the original all-zinc MOF-5 ( $\text{Zn}_4\text{O}(1,4\text{-benzenedicarboxylate})_3$ ) with first row transition metal ions, M-

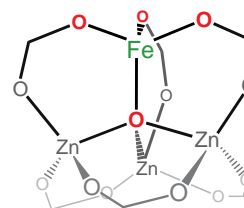


Figure 1 Depiction of the  $\text{FeZn}_3\text{O}$  cluster featured in Fe-MOF-5.

MOF-5 preserve the crystal morphology and metal site coordination sphere of the iconic parent material, allowing heterogeneous reactivity to be studied with molecular specificity.<sup>7,8</sup> With Ni-MOF-5, for instance, we demonstrated that MOF clusters can support unusual metal species that could undergo geometrical transformations and that these species were identifiable by spectroscopy and other physical methods. Reactivity studies of Cr- and Fe-MOF-5 proved that the metal centers could promote redox transformations of small molecules without compromising the MOF lattice. Based on analysis of time-averaged Mössbauer spectra, we propose that the inserted  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$  centres, shown in Figure 1 interact dynamically with  $\text{N}_2$ , leading to rapid fluctuations in the coordination environment of the Fe sites.

### Results

**Synthesis of Fe-doped MOF-5:** Soaking crystals of MOF-5 in a DMF solution of  $\text{Fe}(\text{BF}_4)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  for one week at room temperature furnished cubic yellow crystals of Fe-MOF-5. As discussed in previous reports,<sup>8,9</sup> Fe-MOF-5 crystals exhibit powder X-ray diffraction pattern,  $\text{N}_2$  adsorption isotherm, and

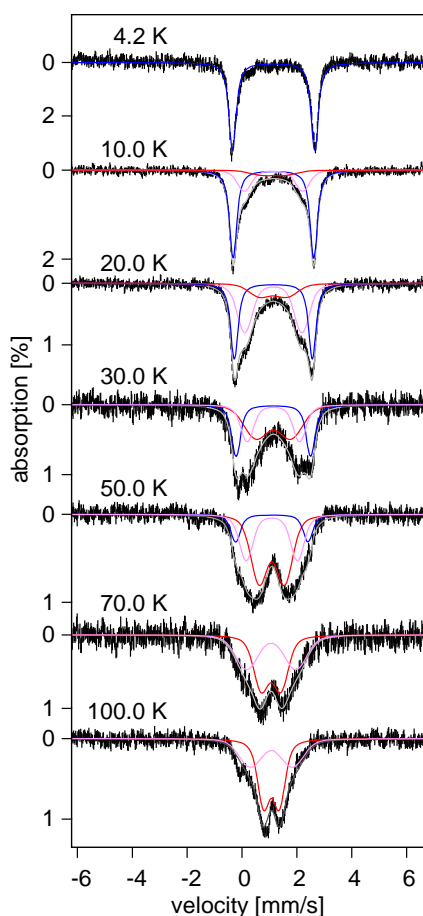
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Brunauer-Emmett-Teller (BET) surface area consistent with MOF-5,<sup>10</sup> and Fe centers with an  $S = 2$  ground state confirmed by SQUID magnetometry.

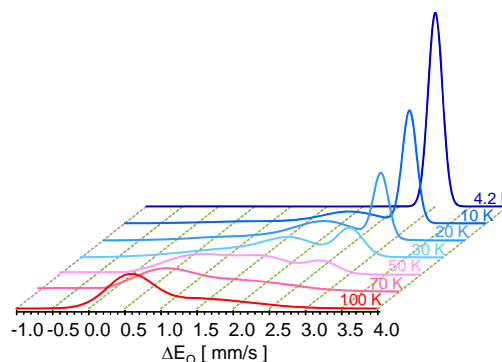
<sup>57</sup>Fe Mössbauer Spectra of N<sub>2</sub>(l)-soaked Fe-MOF-5. To further probe the electronic structure of the Fe sites in Fe-MOF-5, we used <sup>57</sup>Fe Mössbauer spectroscopy.



**Figure 2.** Temperature-dependent zero-field Mössbauer spectra recorded for a non-evacuated, N<sub>2</sub>-soaked Fe-MOF-5 sample. The solid grey lines are simulations obtained considering a distribution in  $\Delta E_Q$  values. The blue, pink and red traces illustrate the three Gaussian components of the  $\Delta E_Q$  distribution.

After carefully optimizing the sample amount that maximized the signal-to-noise ratio, we acquired zero-field Mössbauer spectra for a non-evacuated sample at temperatures between 4.2 K and 100 K (Figure 2). Prior to recording these spectra, the neat Fe-MOF-5 sample was stored and mounted in the spectrometer at 77 K by keeping and handling it under liquid N<sub>2</sub>. Assuming that liquid N<sub>2</sub> penetrates the pores of Fe-MOF-5, we consider the sample saturated with N<sub>2</sub> under these conditions. At 4.2 K we observe a well-defined quadrupole doublet characterized by an isomer shift  $\delta = 1.156(3)$  mm/s, a quadrupole splitting  $\Delta E_Q = 3.02(2)$  mm/s, and a linewidth  $\Gamma = 0.26(1)$  mm/s. These values are typical of high-spin Fe<sup>2+</sup> sites that have a quasi-tetrahedral coordination environment. Moreover, the rather narrow linewidth of these resonances

demonstrates that at 4.2 K the coordination environment of all iron sites is nearly homogeneous. Interestingly, increasing the temperature leads to both an overall drop in the intensity of the spectra and to a dramatic line broadening that is concomitant with a decrease in the apparent value of the quadrupole splitting. Thus, at 100 K the apparent quadrupole splitting contracts to  $\Delta E_Q = 1.0(1)$  mm/s and the linewidth exhibits a dramatic increase to  $\Gamma = 0.80(6)$  mm/s. In contrast, the value of the isomer shift at 100 K remains essentially unchanged from that observed at 4.2 K. Close examination of the spectra reveals that above 4.2 K some of these resonances also exhibit fine structure, which suggests that a differentiation in the coordination environment of the iron ions occurs with increasing temperature. The solid grey lines overlaid over the experimental data in Figure 2 are simulations which were obtained by using the model of multidimensional hyperfine parameter distributions developed by Rancourt et al.<sup>11</sup> For this model, the distribution of a hyperfine splitting parameter, in this instance  $\Delta E_Q$ , is described using a sum of individual Gaussian components. Thus, this highly unusual temperature-dependent behaviour could be rationalized only by considering three distinct components centred at  $\Delta E_Q = 2.8(2)$  mm/s,  $1.9(1)$  mm/s, and  $1.2(2)$  mm/s (see Table S1). The subspectra generated by each individual component are shown as blue, pink, and red traces overlaid over the experimental data of Figure 2. The temperature dependence of the overall distribution in the  $\Delta E_Q$  value is shown in Figure 3.

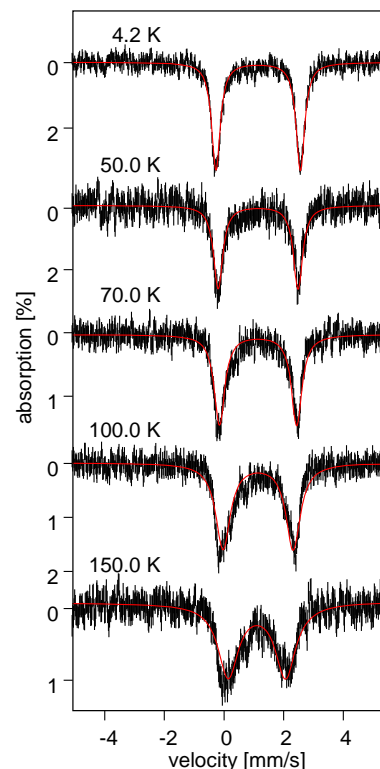


**Figure 3.** Temperature-dependence of the quadrupole splitting distribution observed for the zero-field Mössbauer spectra of the N<sub>2</sub>-soaked Fe-MOF-5 sample. All curves are normalized by area.

<sup>57</sup>Fe Mössbauer Spectra of Fe-MOF-5 Exposed to O<sub>2</sub>(g). To eliminate the possibility that the observed behaviour of Fe-MOF-5 was caused by O<sub>2</sub> contamination in the liquid N<sub>2</sub>, we collected a Mössbauer spectrum of Fe-MOF-5 deliberately exposed to O<sub>2</sub>. Thus, fresh Fe-MOF-5 was heated to 180 °C at 10<sup>-5</sup> torr for 24 h, then exposed to 1 atm of O<sub>2</sub> and sealed for 6 h. After being placed under vacuum, it was prepared for Mössbauer spectroscopy in a manner identical to the previous Fe-MOF-5 sample. As shown in Figure S2, the zero-field spectrum of O<sub>2</sub>-exposed Fe-MOF-5 consists of two nested quadrupole doublets at 4.2 K. Whereas the outer doublet is essentially identical to that of the starting material, the inner doublet is characterized by  $\delta = 0.55$  mm/s and  $\Delta E_Q = 0.81$  mm/s,

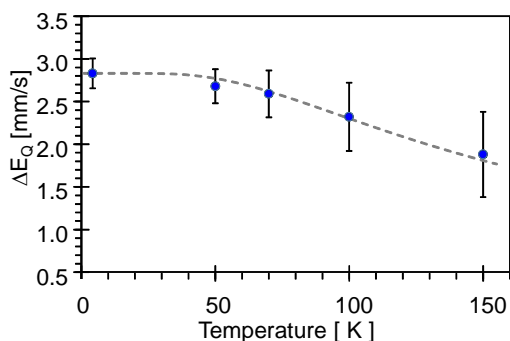
values that are typical of high-spin ferric ions. Therefore, exposure to O<sub>2</sub> cannot account for the anomalous temperature dependence of the Mössbauer spectra observed in pristine Fe(II)-MOF-5 samples that were kept rigorously air-free.

<sup>57</sup>Fe Mössbauer Spectra of Fe-MOF-5 in the absence of N<sub>2</sub>. To assess the effect of adsorbed guest molecules on the iron sites in Fe-MOF-5, we aimed to evacuate the N<sub>2</sub>-filled sample that displayed anomalous temperature and repeat the Mössbauer experiments as before. Thus, the sample used for collecting the spectra under N<sub>2</sub> was placed under high vacuum for approximately 24 h, brought it into an Ar-filled glovebox, and then dispersed in Paratone® N oil, which effectively seals the Fe-MOF-5 sample and prevents it from adsorbing N<sub>2</sub>. Temperature-dependent spectra for this evacuated sample are shown in Figure 4. The zero-field spectrum recorded at 4.2 K is characterized by an isomer shift  $\delta = 1.149(4)$  mm/s, a quadrupole splitting  $\Delta E_Q = 2.83(2)$  mm/s, and a linewidth  $\Gamma = 0.28(1)$  mm/s. These values are very similar to those observed for the N<sub>2</sub>(l)-soaked sample. Most notably, the temperature dependence deviates greatly from that observed for the N<sub>2</sub>(l)-soaked sample. Although the observed isomer shift remains essentially constant,  $\Delta E_Q$  decreases with increasing temperature. The apparent linewidths of the observed quadrupole doublets also increase such that at 150 K the FWHM of the individual resonances becomes nearly 1 mm/s. The linewidth increase notwithstanding, the effect is much less pronounced than that observed for the N<sub>2</sub>-soaked Fe-MOF-5 sample and the spectra can be well described using a single spectral component, i.e., a single type of iron(II) sites. The stark spectral differences for N<sub>2</sub>-filled and evacuated Fe-MOF-5 are further illustrated by Figure S3, which shows a side-by-side comparison of the spectra recorded at 4.2 K and 70 K.



**Figure 4** Temperature dependence of the zero-field Mössbauer spectra recorded for the evacuated Fe-MOF-5 sample. The solid red lines are simulations obtained using a single quadrupole doublet. The temperature dependence of the quadrupole splitting is shown in Figure 5.

The temperature dependence of the quadrupole splitting observed for evacuated Fe-MOF-5 is shown in Figure 5. For quasi-tetrahedral iron(II) sites the experimental  $\Delta E_Q$  temperature dependence can be related to the energy of the lowest excited electronic state. Thus, for tetrahedral sites ( $T_d$  point-group symmetry) the two lowest orbitals of a high-spin, d<sup>6</sup> Fe(II) ion are degenerate and lead to degenerate orbital states for which either a  $x^2-y^2$  or a  $z^2$  is a doubly-occupied orbital. These states are characterized by electric field gradient (EFG) tensors that have components of equal magnitude but opposite signs. In a first approximation, a lowering of the iron site symmetry leads to a splitting of these states by an energy  $\Delta$ . If  $\Delta$  is on the order of  $k_B T$ , increasing the temperature leads to a sizable increase in the Boltzmann population of the lowest-lying excited state. In turn, the increase in the thermal population leads to a decrease in the magnitude of the individual EFG tensor components and thus, to a decrease in the observed  $\Delta E_Q$  value.



**Figure 5.** The temperature-dependence of the  $\Delta E_Q$  (blue circles) determined for the evacuated Fe-MOF-5 sample. The length of the error bars is set equal to the observed linewidths. The dotted line is a theoretical trace obtained for an energy of the lowest excited orbital state  $\Delta = 160 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , see text.

This effect can be modelled using the expression  $\Delta E_Q(T) = \Delta E_Q(4.2 \text{ K}) \cdot \tanh(\Delta/2k_B T)$  (dotted line in Figure 5), which for the evacuated Fe-doped MOF-5 sample leads to an energy splitting of  $\sim 160 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ .

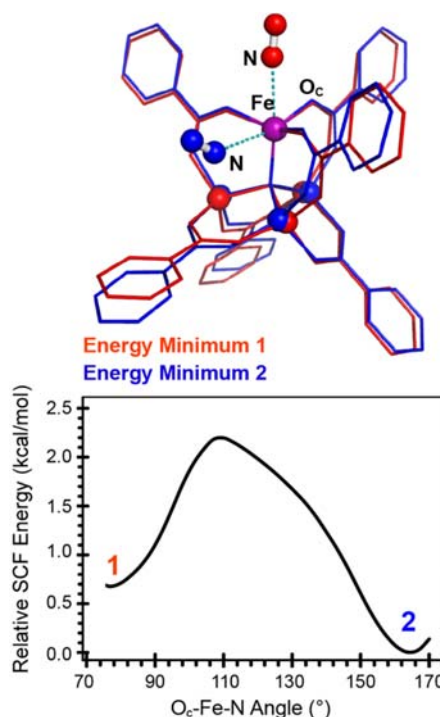
## Discussion

The temperature-dependent spectral behaviour observed for the  $\text{N}_2$ -soaked Fe-MOF-5 samples is unusual. Because the  $T > 4.2 \text{ K}$  Mössbauer spectra recorded for  $\text{N}_2$ -filled and evacuated samples are dramatically different, the atypical temperature dependence observed for the former clearly originates from the interaction of dinitrogen with the Fe sites in Fe-MOF-5. These interactions might lead to both static and dynamic effects. In particular, inclusion of  $\text{N}_2$  within MOF-5 could involve the participation of one or more dinitrogen molecules in the coordination sphere of the quasi-tetrahedral  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$  ions. In turn, these weak bonding interactions can induce static or fluctuating modulation of the EFG at the iron(II) sites.

The effects of fluctuating electric and magnetic fields on the Mössbauer spectra of iron site engaged in dynamic processes were first discussed by Tjon and Blume, who put forth a theoretical model that relied on time-dependent Hamiltonians to account for Jahn-Teller distortions and vacancy hopping.<sup>12,13</sup> These processes yield a ground-state EFG tensor for which the largest component jumps randomly in the  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$  directions. Similar to our observations, low-temperature spectra analysed using this model often displayed well-defined quadrupole doublets which diminished in intensity and exhibited a collapsed quadrupole splitting as the temperature increased.

One of the first instances of a fluctuating EFG was reported by Lindley *et al* for Fe-doped AgCl, which at 80 K displays a well-defined quadrupole doublet converging toward a single resonance at 458 K.<sup>14</sup> This transformation occurs without a concomitant, major change in the intrinsic intensities or linewidths of the observed resonances.<sup>14</sup> This behaviour was ascribed to a charge-balancing vacancy hopping randomly across the crystal. This process disrupts the ligand field around

Fe, causing its electric field gradient to approach zero. Interestingly, a temperature dependence of the zero-field Mössbauer spectra similar to that observed by Lindley *et al* for Fe-doped AgCl and by us for Fe-MOF-5 was also reported for  $[\text{Fe}(\eta^6\text{-C}_6\text{H}_6)(\eta^5\text{-C}_5\text{H}_5)][\text{PnF}_6]$  ( $\text{Pn} = \text{P}, \text{As}$ ).<sup>15,16</sup> In the solid state,



**Figure 6.** Top: Overlay of the geometry optimized structures obtained at the 1 (shown in red) and 2 (shown in blue) energy minima. Bottom: Relative SCF energies predicted for the relaxed scan of the N-Fe-O<sub>c</sub> bond angle.

each organo-iron cation is surrounded by eight anions that form a cubic cage. At low temperature, the iron-containing cation orients along a specific axis within the cage, a preferred orientation that leads to a non-zero EFG. However, as the sample warms, the increase in thermal energy leads to random fluctuations in the orientation of the molecular cation. At high temperatures the thermally activated molecular motion causes the electric field gradient to average to zero. In contrast to the redox-based, charge-transfer process underlying the EFG fluctuation of Fe-doped AgCl, the anomalous temperature dependence of  $\Delta E_Q$  in the case of the organometallic compounds is due to the temperature-induced reorientation of the cation. Considering that the framework supporting the Fe ions in Fe-MOF-5 is redox inert, a charge transfer process cannot account for the anomalous temperature dependence of the EFG of our compound. However, the thermally activated motion of MOF-adsorbed  $\text{N}_2$  molecules, analogous to that observed for  $[\text{Fe}(\eta^6\text{-C}_6\text{H}_6)(\eta^5\text{-C}_5\text{H}_5)]^+$  could, in principle, justify the observed behaviour of  $\text{N}_2$ -soaked Fe-MOF-5.

To evaluate this hypothesis, we investigated the interaction of  $\text{N}_2$  molecules with Fe-MOF-5 using density-functional theory (DFT) calculations. For this purpose, we used a truncated structural model where a single  $\text{FeZn}_3\text{O}$  cluster was considered,

with six benzoate groups replacing the terephthalates in the actual MOF (Figure 6). The calculations employed the B3LYP/6-311G functional/basis set and monitored the predicted zero-field Mössbauer parameters for cases when up to four dinitrogen molecules are in the vicinity of the Fe atom (see Figure S3 and Table S4). Geometry optimizations of structures that included one or more dinitrogen molecules revealed a preferred end-on binding mode. Furthermore, the relaxed scan of the angle formed by the N donor atom of the N<sub>2</sub> moiety with iron and one of the carboxylate oxygen (N-Fe-O<sub>c</sub>) bond angle (Figure 6) revealed the presence of two distinct energy minima. In these calculations, we fixed the value of the N-Fe-O<sub>c</sub> bond angle and allowed all other coordinates to be optimized. In Figure 6 the individual minima are labelled 1 and 2, respectively. An overlay of the two geometry optimized structures obtained at minima 1 and 2 is shown in Figure 6 and the corresponding coordinates are listed in Table S4. In the absence of N<sub>2</sub>, the Fe site has an approximate C<sub>3v</sub> point group symmetry. At energetic minimum 1, the N<sub>2</sub> moiety occupies an apical position that is collinear with the C<sub>3</sub> axis of the Fe site and trans to the μ<sub>4</sub>-O ligand. At minimum 2, N<sub>2</sub> sits in the σ<sub>v</sub> plane that bisects the O<sub>c</sub>-Fe-O<sub>c</sub> angle and equatorial with Fe and carboxylate O atoms. Given the three-fold symmetry of the Fe centre, three equatorial sites are therefore available to N<sub>2</sub>, in addition to the apical site. Consequently, an iron site in Fe-MOF-5 can interact with up to four dinitrogen molecules. Although the predicted self-consistent field (SCF) energy for the interaction of N<sub>2</sub> with the Fe at an equatorial site is ~ 0.7 kcal/mol lower than at the apical site, the predicted Fe–N distance is considerably elongated from 2.68 Å (at apical) to 2.91 Å (at equatorial). This observation strongly suggests that N<sub>2</sub> interaction at an equatorial site is further stabilized by the interaction with the two adjacent Zn ions (the shortest N–Zn distances are 3.19 and 3.64 Å). Inspection of the calculated EFG tensors and zero-field Mössbauer parameters suggests that interaction of a single N<sub>2</sub> molecule in the apical or equatorial sites leaves the ground state EFG tensor, and thus the quadrupole splitting, essentially intact. Instead, we only observe a modest increase in the energy of the lowest energy d orbital (as predicted by TD-DFT; 14% for apical and 33% for equatorial). These observations suggest that the thermal-induced hopping of a single N<sub>2</sub> molecule between the two minima cannot account for the observed temperature dependent behaviour of the experimental EFG tensor. Instead the largest changes in the ground state EFG tensor are induced by the full occupancy of the three equatorial sites, that is, three N<sub>2</sub> moieties interacting simultaneously with the Fe site. When compared to the N<sub>2</sub>-free cluster, the concomitant binding of three dinitrogen molecules to equatorial sites leads to the largest modulation of the EFG tensor, in particular of the y-component of the EFG tensor and of the change in the ΔE<sub>Q</sub> sign. Interestingly, full occupancy of the three equatorial sites (or equatorial and apical sites) leads to a nearly 25% decrease in energy for the average Fe–N<sub>2</sub> interaction. This finding suggests that the adsorption of N<sub>2</sub> in Fe-MOF-5 involves the transient occupation of at least three of the four sites available for interaction with N<sub>2</sub>.

## Experimental Methods

Unless otherwise stated, all materials were treated as air sensitive and were manipulated using common Schlenk and inert atmosphere glovebox technique.

**Materials** Dry, deaerated dichloromethane (DCM, HPLC grade, Honeywell) and DMF (99.8%, VWR) were obtained by degassing with a flow of argon gas for 30 min and by passing the solvent through two silica columns in a Glass Contour Solvent System. 70% HNO<sub>3</sub> (ICP-AES grade, EMD), Fe(BF<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O (97% Sigma-Aldrich), and Zn(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O (99%, Alfa Aesar), and terephthalic acid (Sigma-Aldrich) were used without further modification. MOF-5 was prepared according to literature.<sup>10</sup>

**Physical Measurements** Powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) patterns were recorded on a Bruker Advance II diffractometer equipped with θ/2θ Bragg-Brentano geometry and Ni-filtered Cu-Kα radiation (Kα = 1.5406 Å). The tube voltage and current were 40 kV and 40 mA, respectively. Samples for PXRD were prepared by placing a thin layer of samples on a zero-background silicon crystal plate supported on a cup with dome that screwed-on with a rubber O-ring fitting.

A Micromeritics ASAP 2020 Surface Area and Porosity Analyzer was used to measure nitrogen adsorption isotherms. Oven-dried sample tubes equipped with TranSeals® (Micromeritics) were evacuated and tared. Samples were transferred to the sample tubes, heated to 200 °C for 12 h, and held at that temperature until the outgas rate was less than 2 mtorr/minute. The evacuated sample tubes were weighed again and the sample mass was determined by subtracting the mass of the previously tared tube. N<sub>2</sub> isotherms were measured using liquid nitrogen baths (77 K). UHP grade (99.999% purity) N<sub>2</sub> and He, oil-free valves and gas regulators were used for all free space corrections and measurements.

Iron and zinc analyses were conducted at the MIT Centre for Materials Science and Engineering Shared Experimental Facility (CSME-SEF) using a HORIBA Jobin ACTIVA inductively coupled plasma atomic emission spectrometer (ICP-AES). Standards were prepared from solutions purchased from ULTRA Scientific® designated suitable for ICP analysis. Elemental analysis was performed by Complete Analysis Laboratories, Parsippany, NJ.

Temperature-dependent <sup>57</sup>Fe Mössbauer spectra were recorded using a constant acceleration spectrometer. The instrument was fitted with a liquid helium cooled Janis 8DT Super Varitemp cryostat and an 8 T American Magnetics superconducting magnet. The <sup>57</sup>Co source consisted of 100 mCi <sup>57</sup>Co dispersed in a rhodium metal foil. The isomer shift values are reported against the centre of a RT spectrum recorded for a foil of α-Fe. The absorbers used during this investigation prepared using natural abundance iron and were enclosed in custom made polyethylene absorbers. Spectral simulation were performed using WMOSS (SeeCo, formerly Web Research Co. Edina, MN). Selected, temperature-dependent zero-field spectra were also analysed using the model of multidimensional hyperfine parameter distributions developed by Rancourt et al.

**Synthesis of  $Zn_{4-x}Fe_xO_{13}C_{24}H_{12}$  (Fe-MOF-5)** Evacuated MOF-5 crystals (490 mg, 0.636 mmol) were suspended in 40 mL of DMF and allowed to sit for one minute. A solution of 990 mg (2.93 mmol) of Synthesis of  $Fe(BF_4)_2 \cdot 6H_2O$  in 20 mL of DMF was added to this suspension in a 100 mL jar. This material was stirred gently for a week and subsequently washed and activated in a manner typical for MOF-5 to give cubic yellow crystals.

**Partial Oxidation of Fe-MOF-5 by  $O_2$**  A dry 10 mL Schlenk flask was charged with 100 mg of yellow Fe-MOF-5 and heated to 120 °C at  $10^{-5}$  torr for 18 h. While maintaining heat, the flask was then backfilled with 1 atm of dry  $O_2$  and sealed for 6 h, at which point the material appeared bright orange. The flask was returned to vacuum, then brought into an Ar-filled glovebox to prepare as a sample for Mössbauer spectroscopy.

**Computational Methods** Density functional theory (DFT) calculations were performed using the quantum chemical software package Gaussian 09 C01; see ref S2 of the Supporting Information. All calculations were performed considering a quintet ground spin state using the B3LYP/6-311G functional/basis set combination. Single point SCF calculations and geometry optimizations were completed using standard convergence criteria. For each state, ground state character of the respective electronic configuration was confirmed using time-dependent (TD)-DFT calculations which gave only positive excitation energies. The geometry optimizations of Fe-MOF-5 and (N2)1-Fe-MOF-5 structures at minima 1 and 2 were followed by analytical frequency calculations, which allowed us to confirm the presence of a true minimum for each stationary structure. The electric field gradient (EFG) parameters,  $\Delta EQ$  and  $\eta$  were calculated using the Gaussian 09 properties, prop, keyword, and the efg option. The predicted isomer shifts were determined from the values of charge densities at the  $^{57}Fe$  nuclei using the calibration of Vrajmasu et al.<sup>17</sup>

**Optimization of the Mössbauer Absorbers Thickness** The initial 80-K, zero-field spectrum of Fe-MOF-5 was recorded using a standard 8-mCi  $^{57}Co$  source. To our surprise, even after several weeks of data collection, the signal we observed was barely larger than twice the noise level of the baseline. Consequently, to improve the statistics of our spectra we switched to a 100-mCi source. Furthermore, we optimized the effective thickness of the absorber, that is, the amount of  $^{57}Fe$  in the path of the  $\gamma$  rays, to maximize the signal strength while at the same time minimizing the non-resonant absorption of the 14.4-keV radiation by the Zn ions present in large excess. The relative strength of a Mössbauer spectrum is determined not only by the intensity of the  $^{57}Co$  source and the amount of  $^{57}Fe$  contained by the sample but also by the fraction of the incoming radiation that is non-resonantly absorbed. Thus, the signal-to-noise (STN) ratio is dependent on the sample thickness  $t'$ , such that  $SNT(t') \propto t' \propto e^{-t'\mu_e/2}$ , where  $\mu_e$  represents the total mass absorption coefficient of the sample. This coefficient is an additive quantity and was calculated from the sum of the individual mass absorptions coefficients of the elements present in the sample weighted by their concentration. At 14.41 keV, the absorption coefficient for Zn is  $92 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ , whereas for Fe it is only  $75 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ .<sup>18</sup> With at least 3 Zn for

every Fe in the material, most irradiated 14.41-keV light was not available for Fe to absorb.

## Conclusions

$^{57}Fe$  Mössbauer spectra of Fe-MOF-5 under Ar display a temperature-dependence that becomes pronounced when in an  $N_2$  atmosphere. Mossbauer spectroscopy measurements of the latter indicate the presence of multiple Fe species. Comparison with the spectra of Fe-MOF-5 treated with  $O_2$  rules out oxidation of the Fe sites by  $O_2$  contaminants. Taken together, these results provide evidence that the inserted ferrous sites possess both the flexibility and reactivity to interact with  $N_2$ . Such subtle phenomena can be documented with precision, shedding light on previous reactivity studies of Fe-MOF-5 and inspiring new directions for the use of MOFs containing open metal sites for applications relying upon heterogeneous reactivity.

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