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NASA TECH BRIEF



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Mixed Ether Bath for Electrodeposition of Aluminum

A description is given of an improvement in the Brenner aluminum plating bath technique based on the addition of anisole to the bath mixture. This improved mixture has a lower bath vapor pressure and the electro-deposits obtained from this mixture have greater physical strength than deposits from the Brenner bath. The mixed ether bath consists of:

Anisole to ethyl ether (volume ratio) 1:2

Aluminum Chloride (Molar concentration) 3.4M

Lithium aluminum hydride (Molar concentration) 0.3–0.4 M

However, the operation of the aluminum plating bath is very hazardous because of the ether content and the bath reaction with oxygen, carbon dioxide, and moisture. Consequently, the operations of the plating bath are conducted in a dry nitrogen atmosphere within a glove box.

The mixed ether is cooled during the addition of anhydrous aluminum chloride (AlCl_3) by an immersed cooling coil through which a coolant is circulated.

The AlCl_3 is slowly dissolved into the cold mixed ether carefully so that the bath temperature does not exceed 303°K . If AlCl_3 is added too rapidly, severe localized heating occurs which darkens the solution and occasionally produces unsatisfactory deposits. After the solution is prepared, it remains undisturbed for 16 to 24 hours to permit settling of the minute grey suspended particles. A medium-porosity fritted-glass

Buchner filter is then used to produce the desired crystal clear, light amber solution.

The complete plating solution is accomplished by slowly mixing the AlCl_3 -mixed ether solution with the lithium aluminum hydride (LiAlH_4)-mixed ether solution. This addition of LiAlH_4 must be carefully performed to prevent excessive foaming, temperature (kept below 303°K), and localized precipitation. The bath is complete when the molar concentration of LiAlH_4 is between 0.3 and 0.4 M in the resultant solution and the molar concentration of AlCl_3 is 3.4 M.

The mixed ether bath for the electrodeposition of aluminum may be used to produce various lightweight structures, pressure vessels, or cryogenic tank liners.

Note:

Requests for further information may be directed to:
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Patent status:

No patent action is contemplated by NASA.

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The brief is intended to provide a summary of the results of the research project described in the report. It is not intended to provide a detailed description of the project or to discuss the results in detail. The brief is intended to provide a summary of the results of the research project described in the report. It is not intended to provide a detailed description of the project or to discuss the results in detail.

Method and Basis for Interpretation of Results

The method used in this research project was a combination of theoretical analysis and experimental investigation. The theoretical analysis was based on the principles of fluid mechanics and the experimental investigation was based on the use of a wind tunnel. The results of the theoretical analysis and the experimental investigation are presented in the following sections.

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