

APPLICANTS' COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO OPINION

The following comments are based on the amended claims.

The molding material disclosed in the first cited document (EP A2 378370) is different from the claimed molding material in the structure of the spherical silicone-containing polymer particles. The silicone core of the powder of the claimed composition is crosslinked by the presence of tri- or tetra-functional siloxane units ($[\text{RSiO}_{3/2}]$ unit or $[\text{SiO}_{4/2}]$ unit). To the contrary, the core of the spherical silicone-containing polymer particles disclosed in the first cited document does not contain such tri- or tetra-functional siloxane units, and is crosslinked by the radical polymerization of unsaturated groups which are side chains of linear polysiloxane. It should be noted that the organohydrosiloxane materials taught in the first cited document are linear organohydrosiloxane oligomers (see, column 4, lines 16-41, column 6, lines 30-52), and the first cited document does not teach or suggest to produce crosslinked spherical silicone-containing polymer particles by incorporating tri- or tetra-functional siloxane units. Also the second cited document (DE A1 4233450) does not teach the silicone powder used in the claimed epoxy resin molding material. Therefore, the present invention is novel.

To show the technical effects resulting from the above-described difference, the applicants propose to present the experimental data for the corresponding European patent application. Enclosed please find a copy of the statement which was filed with the European Patent Office and showing the experimental data. In the statement, D1 represents EP A2 378370.

In the showing, Example 4 of the first cited document was copied to produce the surface modified silicone-containing polymer particles, which was then compared with the powder flexibilizer #2 according to Table 1 of the applicants' specification. As apparent from the experimental data, the molding material of the claimed invention, which contains powder including silicone core crosslinked by the presence of tri- or tetra-functional siloxane units, gives a molded product which is superior to the molding material taught in the first cited document in marking properties and thermal shock resistance. The first cited document nor the second cited document does not teach or suggest such effects made by the crosslinking by the incorporation of tri- or tetra-functional siloxane units. Therefore, the present invention also satisfies the inventive step requirement.