

Description

This invention relates to a composition of solder suitable for low temperature soldering of printed circuit boards.

Component assembly and reassembly, or rework, on a printed circuit board using a fountain process is conventionally performed by pumping a liquified solder through a chimney, which attaches the component or connector to the printed circuit board by means of a through hole. Alternatively, a wave solder technique or solder pen may be used.

The walls of the through holes of a circuit board are typically coated with copper metal which makes an electrical contact between at least two levels of circuitry. Components can be mounted onto the circuit board by means of inserting and soldering pins into through holes. Sometimes, through misalignment or misorientation of the pin and hole or because of component failure, it becomes necessary to remove or realign the defective component or soldered pin connection and remount it. This procedure is called rework. Obviously, each time this rework is performed, the board is exposed to localized heating at the point of rework. The composition of the solder is determinant of the temperature required to liquify the solder and thus perform the rework. This temperature is typically about 50°C above the liquidus temperature of the solder composition. The solder flow rate should be kept to a minimum such that the solder remains in the region where it is desired rather than flowing beyond. The soldering time should also be kept to a minimum. The precaution of minimizing temperature, soldering time and flow rate is intended to contribute to minimizing the dissolution of copper from the walls of the conductive through hole into the solder.

One solder conventionally used is the high melt eutectic 63 wt. % Sn/37 wt. % Pb, which liquifies at 183°C. However, with increased component density on printed circuit boards and cards, it has become necessary to expose printed circuit boards to additional rework cycles. The repeated exposure to high temperature soldering contributes to degradation of the organic resins in the laminate, and may produce delamination and distortion in the localized area of the reworked component. Also, with repeated exposure to the high temperature soldering about 183°C + about 50°C, greater amounts of copper dissolved from the walls of the through hole to form Cu₃Sn and Cu₆Sn₅ orthorhombic intermetallics within the solder.

Increased component density also necessitates increased thermal loading or heat sinking of the circuit board. This increase in the capacity of devices to transfer heat away, and other advances, means that longer solder contact times are required to rework printed circuit board devices, and consequently dissolution of copper from the walls of the conductive through hole into the solder results, giving rise to the necessity of the present invention.

This invention therefore relates to a composition of low temperature solder comprising tin, in which is also present a dopant level of copper in an amount below the binary tin-copper eutectic point. The new solder may be applied to the material to be soldered using solder fountain and other conventional soldering techniques. Because of its low melting point relative to other copper containing solders, the new solder may be used for nondestructive soldering of materials not amenable to being soldered by copper containing solders available heretofore.

FR-A- 2 105 808 discloses a ternary, copper-free solder composition consisting of 50.6 - 57.4 % Sn, 24.4 - 27.6 % Pb (the ratio Pb/Sn = 0.48) and 15 - 25 % In which is particularly suitable for soldering of thermal high sensitive electrical elements.

Most specifically, this invention relates to a composition of copper doped low temperature solder suitable for use in component assembly and rework on printed circuit cards or boards.

There has been a wide range of solder compositions reported in the art. By a judicious choice of elemental ingredients and proportions, solders have been devised for a number of specific applications, such as to wet and bond to carbon and semiconductors (US-A-4 512 950 to Hosoda et al, issued April 23, 1985 and US-A-4 396 677 to Intrater, issued August 2, 1983), to inhibit the formation of oxide (US-A-4 654 275 to Bose, issued March 31, 1987, to increase tensile strength (US-A-4 588 657 to Kujas, issued May 13, 1986), to soft solder aluminum (US-A-4 070 192 to Arbib et al, issued January 24, 1978, to bond semiconductor to metal (US-A-4 357 162 to Guan, issued November 2, 1982), to bond oxide surfaces using vibration (US-A-4 106 930 to Nomaki et al, issued August 15, 1978), to solder joints for lead-free potable water (US-A-4 695 428 to Ballentine et al, issued September 22, 1987), and to improve the tarnish resistance of jewelry (US-A-3 650 735 to Monaco, issued March 21, 1972).

However, the problem which is solved by the present invention is quite different: how to assemble and rework a through hole connection in a printed circuit device in such a manner that the dissolution of a copper coating on the walls of the through hole connection into the solder is suppressed. Rework is reflowing the solder in the joint.

In US-A-2 671 844 to Laubmeyer et al, issued March 9, 1954, it is recognized that the addition of an amount of copper to a tin/lead solder slows the wear of an electrical soldering bit made of copper, which tended to dissolve in the solder. The addition of 3% copper to the solder reduced the rate of dissolution of the copper bit by 25%, and 5% copper reduced the rate to 10% of the rate it was with no copper present in the solder. Any effect on soldering temperature as a result of the addition of the copper to the solder was not described, and this technique became obsolete with the advent of nonreactive bits and non-contact soldering methods. The '844 patent described that it was "essential that an eutectic of tin and copper should form in the (solder) alloy", that eutectic consisting of 99% Sn and 1% Cu (see column 2, lines 30-37). It also described that whatever the amount of copper in the solder, it should be minimally sufficient to form this binary tin-copper eutectic point. Thus in a 50/50 Pb/Sn solder, Cu in the amount of 0.5% of the total weight of the solder should be added.

In US-A-4 622 205 to Fouts et al, issued November 11, 1986, copper in Pb/Sn solder in a certain amount extended the life of copper conductor lines by decreasing electromigration between the solder joint and the line during the passage of current at an operating range of 50°C-90°C. The source of the difficulty with respect to electromigration was attributed to non-uniform distribution of intermetallic particles of Cu_3Sn and trace Cu_6Sn_5 in the solder. The solution to the problem was identified as adding to the solder an element which forms an intermetallic alloy with tin, such as copper, in an amount at least about 0.5% to less than about 10% of the solder, preferably 3.5 wt. % Cu, to slow grain boundary diffusion, thereby reducing the tendency to electromigration and thermomigration.

Copper containing solder has been obtainable on the marketplace since at least about 1964, the publication date of Solders and Soldering, pp. 65-66 McGraw-Hill Book Co., H. H. Manko. However, this reference does not give specific compositions of commercially available copper containing solders, saying only that the amount is "high".

A commercially available product called Savbit 1 alloy, obtainable from Multicore of Westbury, NY, comprising about 1.5% to about 2.0% Cu by weight, has been used to extend the life of copper soldering tips in static hand soldering applications. Product data sheets, however, recommend a minimum bit temperature of 272-294°C, above the range required for nondestructive assemblies and rework on printed circuit boards and cards.

Other problems which can result from the addition of copper to solders include increase in solidification time and formation of bridges (shorts), cold solder joints, nodules and various additional defects.

The present invention as claimed is directed to a novel solder composition which retards the dissolution of copper within and surrounding a through hole or blind via and operates at a lower temperature than before possible with available copper containing solders, permitting assembly and repeated rework of faulty solder connections in and around the through holes of printed circuit boards while also avoiding other problems associated with higher temperature rework, such as delamination of layers in the laminate board, localized mechanical distortion, and degeneration of solder joints and exceeding the critical temperature of the mounted device.

It is an object of the invention therefore to solder and rework onto copper surfaces without degrading the mechanical properties and solderability of the solder.

It is a further object of the invention to solder and rework onto a copper surface at a sufficiently low temperature to avoid mechanical and performance degradation of the device with which the copper surface is associated.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a copper containing solder which is suitable for soldering to a copper surface at low soldering temperatures.

It is a further object of the invention to solder and rework within copper plated through holes while suppressing the dissolution of the copper into the solder.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a copper containing solder suitable for soldering onto a copper surface in solder assembly and rework.

Contrary to the teachings of the art, it has been surprisingly discovered in the present invention that doping solder comprising tin to contain non-zero levels of copper in amounts below the binary tin-copper eutectic point composition significantly reduces the amount of copper dissolution from the walls of through holes into the copper doped solder during assembly and rework while not degrading the solderability of the solder or increasing the soldering temperature. Also contrary to the teachings of the art, it has been found that this effect occurs in a copper containing tin solder having a soldering temperature low enough to avoid delamination or other temperature related degradation within multilevel circuit board assemblies and provide good fatigue properties. Below the binary tin-copper eutectic point is defined as 99.1 wt. % Sn 0.9 wt. % Cu to 100 wt. % Sn as defined on page 299 of Metallography, Structures and Phase Diagrams, by the American Society for Metals.

For a better understanding of the present invention, together with further objects and advantages, a preferred embodiment of the invention is described in the following with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

- 5 Figure 1 shows in cross-section through the length of a copper plated through hole one corner of the hole which has been soldered with nominal 54 tin/26 lead/20 indium low melt solder, but has not undergone rework. In the solder art, nominal value is the preferred actual stated value. There is an acceptable range associated with the nominal value. For example, 54 tin/26 lead/20 indium weight percent is a nominal value, with an acceptable range of plus or minus 2% to the nominal value. Magnification is 800X.
- 10 Figure 2 shows in cross-section through the length of one corner of a copper plated through hole after four reworks with the solder used in Figure 1, doped to contain 0.14 wt. % Cu. Magnification is 800X.
- Figure 3 shows in cross section one corner of a copper plated through hole after four reworks with the solder used in Figure 1, undoped.
- 15 Figure 4 shows the amounts of copper dissolved from the plated walls of through holes by a copper doped ternary solder of nominal composition 54 wt. % tin/26 lead/20 indium for up to 200 seconds of exposure at about 204 ° C.

It has been discovered in the present invention that a copper doped solder, comprising also lead and tin and indium within certain nominal composition ranges is effective to permit assembly and multiple
20 nondestructive low temperature rework of soldered through hole and blind via connections in boards and cards. It is proposed that solder compositions within the following ranges would be effective for this purpose; a trace amount meaning .02 wt. %, an amount that may be present without being added, or which lies within the lowest error range. Trace amounts are inconsequential in effect.

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tin	53 to 55% by weight
lead	25 to 27% by weight
indium	18 to 22% by weight
copper	above trace amounts to 0.50% by weight, the amount in a particular instance selected to be below the binary tin-copper eutectic point.

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In particular, it has been found that the following nominal composition is likewise effective:

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tin	54% by weight
lead	26% by weight
indium	20% by weight
copper	in an amount above trace amounts selected to be below the binary tin-copper eutectic point.

40 Figure 1 shows in cross-section one corner of a copper plated through hole which has been soldered with nominal 54 tin/26 lead/20 indium low melt solder, but has not undergone rework. Magnification is 800X.

Figure 2 shows in cross-section one corner of a copper plated through hole after four reworks with a solder of essentially the same nominal composition as shown in Figure 1, but doped to contain 0.14 wt. % Cu. Magnification is 800X.

45 Figure 3 shows in cross-section one corner of a copper plated through hole after four reworks with a solder being the same composition as the solder shown in Figure 1.

The black areas of the figures are the dielectric of the circuit board. The layered intermediate areas are plated copper. The grayish area is the solder. In Figure 1, the through hole has been soldered but has undergone no rework. In Figure 3 by comparison, the through hole has undergone four cycles of rework and
50 the plated copper layer is no longer electrically continuous. The through hole of Figure 2 has, like Figure 3, undergone four cycles of rework, the difference being that solder used in Figure 2 is copper doped, and the plated copper layer is still electrically continuous.

The results illustrated in the above Figures are representative of results obtained consistently in soldering, rework and examining 8,500 through holes.

55 A copper plated through hole which has undergone four reworks with conventional undoped Pb/Sn solder shows substantially no copper remaining on the through-hole walls.

Figure 4 shows the copper thickness dissolved from the walls of through holes which were exposed to a ternary solder doped with copper in amounts below the binary tin-copper eutectic point, 0.10 weight percent

to 0.20 weight percent. The nominal composition of the ternary solder in ratios of weight percent was 54 tin/26 lead/20 indium, plus the copper dopant. The figure also shows for comparison purposes the amount of copper dissolved into virgin, i.e. undoped, solder. The data were obtained in the following manner: Time zero control measurements were taken on raw cards via metallographic cross sectioning. There were four
 5 raw card technologies and eight different components to represent a worst case product hardware test. Each component was reworked on a solder fountain the maximum amount required for each card technology. The solder contact time was kept the same for each component and varied slightly for different component type with the total solder contact time up to about 200 seconds. Final measurements (after maximum number of reworks) were taken via metallographic cross sectioning within the module site and in
 10 the adjacent plated through holes next to the module site. All data points were averaged for each module site. All averaged module site data points were averaged for each module type. The averaged final measurements were subtracted from the averaged initial measurements to determine the averaged amount of copper dissolved. These values were averaged with all components for each of the copper levels and plotted on a "Copper Dissolved vs. % Copper in Solder" graph. Photomicrographs at time zero, and after
 15 four reworks with virgin solder and after four reworks with 0.14% copper doped solder depict the advantage of copper doping. The figure indicates that in the ternary solders discussed above, the amount of copper dissolved drops dramatically with the addition of copper dopant and continues to drop as more dopant is added, up to the limit tested.

In sum, the experiments have shown that the solder compositions selected below the binary tin-copper
 20 eutectic point are desirable for soldering and rework of copper and copper clad materials for the following reasons:

- (a) they can be used for assembly and rework at soldering temperatures lower than the soldering temperatures required for solder compositions above the binary tin-copper eutectic point;
- (b) they demonstrate improved fatigue integrity compared to solder compositions above the binary tin-copper eutectic point;
- 25 (c) they dissolve copper from the workpiece at a slow rate, comparable to solders containing amounts of copper above the binary tin-copper eutectic point; and
- (d) they demonstrate improved solderability over solder compositions above the binary tin-copper eutectic point.

30 It will be obvious to those skilled in the art that while the composition of the present invention has been effective in soldering and reworking copper coated circuit boards, it is equally applicable to soldering any material that comprises copper and for which low temperature soldering is desirable or necessary.

Claims

- 35 1. Solder composition suitable for low temperature soldering of printed circuit boards inhibiting copper dissolution during soldering and rework of copper coated and copper containing electronic devices, comprising tin, lead and indium and as a dopant copper wherein the amount of copper (by weight) is in the range of more than 0.02 % to less than 0.9 % and the amounts of tin, lead and indium are within
 40 the following ranges (wt %)

tin	53 % to 55 %
lead	25 % to 27 %
indium	18 % to 22 %,

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the total of tin, lead and indium being 100 %.

- 50 2. Solder composition of claim 1, wherein the solder is nominally comprised of 54 wt. % tin/26 wt. % lead/20 wt. % indium, and doped with 0.12. to 0.20 wt. % copper.

Patentansprüche

- 55 1. Lotzusammensetzung, geeignet zum Löten von Leiterplatten bei niedriger Temperatur, die eine Kupferauflösung während des Lötens und der Wiedermontage von kupferbeschichteten und kupferenthaltenden elektronischen Bauteilen verhindert, umfassend Zinn, Blei und Indium und als eine Dotierung Kupfer, wobei der Anteil des Kupfers (als Gewichtsanteil) in dem Bereich von mehr als 0,02 % und weniger als 0,9 % liegt und die Anteile von Zinn, Blei und Indium in den folgenden Bereichen (Gew. %)



to 0.20 weight percent. The nominal composition of the ternary solder in ratios of weight percent was 54 tin/26 lead/20 indium, plus the copper dopant. The figure also shows for comparison purposes the amount of copper dissolved into virgin, i.e. undoped, solder. The data were obtained in the following manner: Time zero control measurements were taken on raw cards via metallographic cross sectioning. There were four
 5 raw card technologies and eight different components to represent a worst case product hardware test. Each component was reworked on a solder fountain the maximum amount required for each card technology. The solder contact time was kept the same for each component and varied slightly for different component type with the total solder contact time up to about 200 seconds. Final measurements (after maximum number of reworks) were taken via metallographic cross sectioning within the module site and in
 10 the adjacent plated through holes next to the module site. All data points were averaged for each module site. All averaged module site data points were averaged for each module type. The averaged final measurements were subtracted from the averaged initial measurements to determine the averaged amount of copper dissolved. These values were averaged with all components for each of the copper levels and plotted on a "Copper Dissolved vs. % Copper in Solder" graph. Photomicrographs at time zero, and after
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In sum, the experiments have shown that the solder compositions selected below the binary tin-copper eutectic point are desirable for soldering and rework of copper and copper clad materials for the following reasons:

- (a) they can be used for assembly and rework at soldering temperatures lower than the soldering temperatures required for solder compositions above the binary tin-copper eutectic point;
- (b) they demonstrate improved fatigue integrity compared to solder compositions above the binary tin-copper eutectic point;
- (c) they dissolve copper from the workpiece at a slow rate, comparable to solders containing amounts of copper above the binary tin-copper eutectic point; and
- (d) they demonstrate improved solderability over solder compositions above the binary tin-copper eutectic point.

It will be obvious to those skilled in the art that while the composition of the present invention has been effective in soldering and reworking copper coated circuit boards, it is equally applicable to soldering any material that comprises copper and for which low temperature soldering is desirable or necessary.

Claims

1. Solder composition suitable for low temperature soldering of printed circuit boards inhibiting copper dissolution during soldering and rework of copper coated and copper containing electronic devices, comprising tin, lead and indium and as a dopant copper wherein the amount of copper (by weight) is in the range of more than 0.02 % to less than 0.9 % and the amounts of tin, lead and indium are within the following ranges (wt %)

tin	53 % to 55 %
lead	25 % to 27 %
indium	18 % to 22 %,

the total of tin, lead and indium being 100 %.

2. Solder composition of claim 1, wherein the solder is nominally comprised of 54 wt. % tin/26 wt. % lead/20 wt. % indium, and doped with 0.12. to 0.20 wt. % copper.

Patentansprüche

1. Lotzusammensetzung, geeignet zum Löten von Leiterplatten bei niedriger Temperatur, die eine Kupferauflösung während des Lötens und der Wiedermontage von kupferbeschichteten und kupferenthaltenden elektronischen Bauteilen verhindert, umfassend Zinn, Blei und Indium und als eine Dotierung Kupfer, wobei der Anteil des Kupfers (als Gewichtsanteil) in dem Bereich von mehr als 0,02 % und weniger als 0,9 % liegt und die Anteile von Zinn, Blei und Indium in den folgenden Bereichen (Gew. %)

liegen:



Zinn	53 % bis 55 %,
Blei	25 % bis 27 %,
Indium	18 % bis 22 %,

wobei die Gesamtmenge von Zinn, Blei und Indium 100 % beträgt.

- 10 2. Lotzusammensetzung nach Anspruch 1, wobei das Lot nominell 54 Gew. % Zinn/26 Gew. % Blei/20 Gew. % Indium umfaßt und mit 0,12 bis 0,20 Gew. % Kupfer dotiert ist.

Revendications

- 15 1. Composé de soudure à l'étain adapté pour le soudage à l'étain à basses températures de cartes à circuits imprimés conçu pour empêcher la dissolution du cuivre au cours du soudage et pour permettre l'apport de retouches aux composants électroniques enrobés de cuivre ou contenant du cuivre, à base d'étain, de plomb et d'indium, et de cuivre comme agent de dopage, dans lequel la teneur en cuivre (en pourcentage du poids) est comprise entre au moins 0,02% et au plus 0,9% et les teneurs en étain, plomb et indium sont comprises dans les plages suivantes (en pourcentage du poids) :

étain	53% à 55%
plomb	25% à 27%
indium	18% à 22%

le total étain, plomb plus indium étant égal à 100%.

- 20 2. Composé de soudure à l'étain selon la revendication 1, dans lequel la soudure est normalement composée de 54% d'étain / 26% de plomb / 20% d'indium en pourcentage du poids, et dopée avec 0,12 à 0,20% de cuivre en pourcentage du poids.