CLAIMS

1. Potassium bicarbonate having a particle size substantially all less than 500 μ and coated with a layer of a substantially dry anionic surfactant selected from the group consisting of alkali metal and alkaline earth metal soaps, said layer having a contact angle of at least 90°.

2. Potassium bicarbonate according to claim 1, wherein said surfactant is present in a proportion of less than 5% by weight based on the total weight of the coated particles.

3. Potassium bicarbonate according to either of claims 1 and 2, wherein the surfactant is present in conjunction with from 0.25 to 5%, based on the weight of bicarbonate, of silicon dioxide.

4. Potassium bicarbonate according to claim 3, wherein the weight of silicon dioxide is from 50% to 500% by weight, based on the weight of surfactant.

5. Potassium bicarbonate according to claim 1, wherein the surfactant comprises a soap of a metal selected from the group consisting of sodium and potassium.

6. Potassium bicarbonate according to claim 1, wherein said surfactant comprises at least one compound of the molecular formula $(RCO_2)_nX$, where: X is selected from the group consisting of alkaline earth metal, hydrated alkaline earth metal, and alkali metal ions, each R, is independently selected from the group consisting of straight and branched chain alkyl and alkenyl groups having from 6 to 25 carbon atoms and n is the valency of X.

7. Potassium bicarbonate according to claim 1, wherein said potassium bicarbonate has a D50 between 35 and 200μ and is substantially free from particles greater than 400μ.

8. Potassium bicarbonate according to claim 1, having a D50 greater than 50μ.

9. Potassium bicarbonate according to claim 1, wherein the contact angle is greater than 100°.

10. A method of preparing potassium bicarbonate according to claim 1, which comprises milling potassium bicarbonate to a particle size of less than 500μ, and mixing the bicarbonate with a substantially dry anionic surfactant or precursor thereof selected from the group consisting of alkali metal and alkaline earth metal soaps, fatty acids, fatty acid chlorides, fatty acid anhydrides and ammonium salts of fatty acids, said anionic surfactant having a particle size less than 50μ, wherein said mixing occurs before, , during or after milling and entails the application of sufficient shear to form a contact angle greater than 90° during milling and/or by stirring the mixture in a blender, subsequent to milling.

11. A leavening composition comprising potassium bicarbonate according to any one of claims 1, 2 and 5 and an acidulant.

12. A composition according to claim 11 wherein the acidulant comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of sodium acid pyrophosphate, sodium aluminium phosphate, mono-calcium phosphate, di-calcium phosphate, glucono-delta-lactone, citric acid, tartaric acid, sodium citrate, potassium citrate, tartrate aluminium sulphate, and sodium aluminium sulphate.

13. A composition according to either of claims 11 and 12 wherein the proportion of the acidulant is from 10 to 75% by weight based on the total weight of the mixture.

14. A fire extinguisher containing a fire extinguishing powder comprising potassium bicarbonate according to any one of claims 1 to 9.

15. Cement containing a catalytic amount of potassium bicarbonate according to any one of claims 1 to 9.