

"NITROGENATED EVAPORABLE GETTER DEVICES WITH HIGH
FRITTING RESISTANCE AND PROCESS FOR THEIR PRODUCTION"

DESCRIPTION

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The present invention relates to nitrogenated evaporable getter devices with high fritting resistance and to a process for their production.

10 Evaporable getter devices are known to be used mostly for keeping the vacuum inside the TV-set kinescopes and the computer screens. The use of these devices is also studied inside flat screens, by now in course of development.

Evaporable getter devices are used in the kinescopes as forerunners of a barium thin layer deposited onto the inner walls of the kinescopes, this layer being the active element in the gas sorption.

15 These devices are generally formed of an open metal container, wherein there are powders of a barium and aluminium compound (BaAl_4) and powders of nickel (Ni) in a weight ratio of about 1:1. The barium is evaporated, once the kinescope has been evacuated and sealed, by induction-heating the device by means of a coil arranged outside the kinescope, according to an activation process also defined by the English term "flash". When the temperature of the powders reaches a value of
20 about 800 °C, this reaction takes place:



This reaction is strongly exothermic, and causes the temperature of powders to reach about 1200 °C, at which there occurs the evaporation of barium which is deposited by sublimation onto the kinescope walls.

25 Better barium films are known to be obtained when, during the "flash" operation, in the kinescope there is a small partial pressure of gas, generally nitrogen; in fact, under these conditions the evaporated barium is homogeneously spread in all the directions, and the resulting thin layer of metal has a more uniform thickness and a larger surface.

30 For this purpose evaporable getter devices are used which contain, besides BaAl_4 and Ni, small amounts of a nitrogenated compound releasing nitrogen during

the "flash" operation. The nitrogen is then resorbed by the barium thin layer within a few seconds. The more commonly used compounds are iron nitride (Fe_3N_4), germanium nitride (Ge_3N_4) or mixed nitrides of iron and germanium. Getter devices of this type are indicated as "nitrogenated".

5 The production processes of kinescopes, whether they are of the conventional or flat type, comprise the welding of two glass members carried out by a so-called "fritting" operation, wherein a glass paste, having a melting point of about 450 °C, is molten or softened between the two members in presence of air.

10 The introduction of the getter device into the conventional kinescopes may be carried out after the fritting, through the neck intended for the housing of the electron gun; however, in this case the size of the getter device is limited by the neck diameter, and the accurate positioning of the device inside the kinescope is hard. On the contrary, in the case of flat screens, the introduction of the getter device after the fritting operation is almost impossible. Thus, the kinescope
15 manufacturers are more and more concentrating on the introduction of the getter device before the fritting.

 During the fritting step, the getter device is indirectly heated and at the same time exposed to the atmospheric gases and to the vapors discharged by the low-melting glass paste. Under these conditions the components of the getter device are
20 superficially oxidized, to a different extent depending upon the specific compound. This oxidation results in a strongly exothermic and hardly controllable reaction during the "flash" operation; this may result in the uplifting of the powder packet, in the ejection of fragments thereof or in the partial melting of the container, thus compromising the effective working of the getter device and accordingly of the
25 kinescope. Moreover, the nitrogenated compound may also undergo a partial loss of nitrogen.

 Evaporable getter devices which may resist to the fritting operation without modifications, or anyhow without resulting in the aforementioned drawbacks, are defined as "frittable".

30 The fritting operation generally lasts for about an hour, or anyhow less than two hours. Getter devices being frittable under these conditions are already known

and disclosed in previous patents.

Patent US 4077899 discloses non-nitrogenated evaporable getter devices which are made frittable by using nickel powders having a particle size ranging from 30 to 65 μm , instead of a smaller particle size, generally smaller than 20 μm ,
5 generally used for non-frittable devices.

Patent US 4127361, in the applicant's name, discloses getter devices made frittable by a protecting layer of organosilanes. This coating is effective in reducing the oxidation extent of the nickel and of the possibly present Fe_4N , and accordingly the aforementioned problems occurring during the operation of barium evaporation,
10 however the coating process by this method has been found to be too slow and thus incompatible with the industrial production.

Patent FR 2351495 discloses the coating of the whole getter device with a thin layer of silicon oxide obtained by hydrolysis of an organic silicate. However, the resulting layer of silicon oxide is porous and, though reducing it, does not avoid
15 the nickel oxidation, with the consequent drawbacks even for fritting times of less than two hours.

Patent US 4342662 discloses getter devices protected by a thin vitreous layer of a boron compound selected among boron oxide and boric acids, possibly further containing silicon oxide in an amount not greater than 7% by weight; these devices
20 withstand the fritting at 450 °C for a time up to two hours.

Finally the published Japanese patent Hei-2-6185 discloses the protection at least of the nickel by means of a protecting layer made of boron oxide only.

However, in some cases, irregularities in the production cycle of kinescopes may result in fritting times lasting up to about five hours, either as continuous steps
25 or as sum of the times of consecutive fritting steps.

The known nitrogenated evaporable getter devices are not capable of withstanding the fritting for so long.

The object of the present invention is to provide nitrogenated evaporable getter devices with a high fritting resistance, as well as to provide a process for
30 producing said devices.

These objects are achieved according to the present invention, which, in its

first aspect, relates to getter devices comprising an open metal container wherein there is a mixture of:

- BaAl_4 , in form of powders having particle size smaller than $250\text{ }\mu\text{m}$;
- nickel, in form of powders having, at least for 80% by weight, a particle size ranging from 10 to $60\text{ }\mu\text{m}$, the rest consisting of powders having a particle size smaller than $10\text{ }\mu\text{m}$; and
- a third component, in form of powders having a particle size smaller than $125\text{ }\mu\text{m}$, consisting of discrete particles comprising grains of a nitrogenated compound selected among iron nitride (Fe_4N), germanium nitride (Ge_3N_4) or mixed nitrides of iron and germanium, said grains being coated by a thin vitreous layer of a mixed oxide comprising boron oxide (B_2O_3) and silicon oxide (SiO_2), formed through a sol-gel process employing a starting solution wherein the atomic ratio between boron and silicon ranges about from 0.75:1 to 4:1

As previously stated, the production was known of nitrogenated evaporable getter devices made frittable by coating with a protecting layer at least of the nickel, or of all the powder packet. Furthermore, the use was known of vitreous protective layers consisting only of boron oxide (B_2O_3), only of silicon oxide (SiO_2) or of mixed compositions of these compounds wherein the SiO_2 amount was not greater than about 7% by weight.

On the contrary, it has been surprisingly found that, by coating only the grains of the nitrogenated compound with a layer of a $\text{B}_2\text{O}_3 / \text{SiO}_2$ mixed oxide, obtained through a sol-gel process employing a starting solution wherein the atomic ratio between boron and silicon ranges about from 0.75:1 to 4:1, it is possible to obtain nitrogenated evaporable getter devices being frittable and that the devices thus obtained are resistant to the fritting treatment for longer times than the known devices, and in particular for times of at least five hours.

In order to obtain the devices according to the invention, it is also necessary to use nickel having a selected particle size, wherein at least 80% by weight of the powder has a particle size ranging from 10 to $60\text{ }\mu\text{m}$; the rest of the powder may consist of fine powders, having a particle size smaller than $10\text{ }\mu\text{m}$.

The getter devices according to the invention may comprise any metal container known in the field; for the description of some possible shapes and of the constitutive materials of the container, patents US 4127361, 4323818, 4486686, 4504765, 4642516, 4961040 and 5118988 should be referred to.

5 In the container there is the mixture of powders of BaAl_4 , nickel and coated nitrogenated compound. The weight ratio between BaAl_4 and Ni generally ranges from 45:55 to 55:45, while the percent weight of the nitrogenated compound generally ranges from 0.5% to 2.5% of the total weight of the powder mixture.

10 The BaAl_4 powder has a particle size smaller than 250 μm . The nickel powder preferably has a particle size ranging from 30 to 50 μm . The powder of the third component, consisting of the coated nitrogenated compound, has a particle size smaller than about 125 μm .

The particles of this component are produced from nitrogenated compound grains having a size smaller than 30 μm , and preferably smaller than 15 μm . The coating of the nitrogenated compound grains consists of a thin vitreous layer of a $\text{B}_2\text{O}_3 / \text{SiO}_2$ mixed oxide. The weight ratio between the nitrogenated compound and the mixed oxide in the third component ranges from about 100:2 to 100:5.

The invention relates, in a second aspect thereof, to a process for producing nitrogenated evaporable getter devices with a high fritting resistance.

20 The process according to the invention comprises the following steps:

A) coating the grains of a nitrogenated compound selected among iron nitride (Fe_4N), germanium nitride (Ge_3N_4) or mixed nitrides of iron and germanium having a particle size smaller than 30 μm , and preferably smaller than 15 μm , with a thin vitreous layer of a $\text{B}_2\text{O}_3 / \text{SiO}_2$ mixed composition, so as to obtain a powder of discrete particles having a particle size smaller than 125 μm ;

B) mixing the powder of the particles thus obtained with the BaAl_4 powder, having a particle size smaller than 250 μm , and with the nickel powder, wherein at least 80% by weight has a particle size ranging from 10 to 60 μm , the rest consisting of powders having a particle size smaller than 10 μm ;

30 C) introducing the powder mixture thus obtained into an open container and

compressing it inside the container by means of a suitably shaped punch.

The powders of the aforementioned nitrogenated compounds, as well as the powders of the $BaAl_4$ compound and of Ni, are available on the market, whereas the powder of the nitrogenated compound in the form protected by the vitreous layer is not available on the market.

The coating of the powders of the nitrogenated compound with the vitreous layer referred to in step A), is in turn carried out through the following steps:

- a) the grains of the dry nitrogenated compound are introduced into a container;
- 10 b) the grains of nitrogenated compound are added, under continuous stirring, with an alcoholic or hydroalcoholic solution containing forerunners of the boron oxide and of the silicon oxide, thus obtaining a wet slurry of the nitrogenated compound;
- 15 c) the stirring at room temperature is continued until dry particles are obtained, a step requiring about 15 minutes;
- d) a mild grinding, at a temperature between room temperature and about 100 °C, is carried out on the dry particles obtained in the previous step;
- e) the particles thus obtained are sieved for collecting the fraction having a particle size smaller than 125 μm .

20 In the aforementioned step b) the coating of the nitrogenated compound grains is carried out with a thin liquid layer of the alcoholic or hydroalcoholic solution. In order to obtain the slurry, a solution amount is used ranging from 200 to 400 ml per 1 Kg of nitrogenated compound powders; a smaller solution amount does not result in a homogeneous grain coating, whereas greater amounts uselessly
25 extend the times for the slurry drying.

In step c) the solvent evaporates, thus leaving on the surface of the nitrogenated compound grains a thin layer of boron and silicon oxides; this layer still contains small amounts of solvent and has adhesive properties, wherefore the coated grains may form agglomerations.

30 In step d) the vitrification of the oxide layer is carried out; this step has to be combined with a mild grinding, in order to reduce the dimensions of the

aforementioned agglomerations and prevent the particles coated by the mixed oxide layer from having an exceeding size. The mild grinding may be carried out also by means of a vibrating screen, wherein the particles are at the same time vibrated, thus at least partially disgregating the aggregates, and sieved in order to collect the fraction having the desired particle size. The operation temperature in this step may range from room temperature to about 100 °C; working at a relatively high temperature in this range may help releasing and eliminating the last traces of solvent from the vitreous layer of mixed oxides. This operation may be repeated several times, e.g. from five to ten times, in order to enhance the aggregate disgregation and collect the greatest product amount, and to favor the formation of the vitreous layer.

Finally, in step e) the coated particles having an exceeding size are removed.

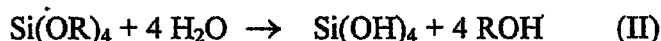
In order to prepare the solution, a low-molecular weight alcohol, such as methyl alcohol, ethyl alcohol or isopropyl alcohol, is generally used as solvent.

The forerunners of the boron oxide are generally alcoholates having general formula $B(OR)_3$, wherein the three groups -OR may be different from one another, but are preferably identical, and wherein each R is a primary, secondary or tertiary alkyl radical having a linear or branched chain of up to 5 carbon atoms; the use of boron triethylate is preferred.

As forerunners of silicon oxide, alcoholates of general formula $Si(OR)_4$ are generally used, wherein R is the same as in the boron alcoholates; the use is preferred of tetramethylate and tetraethylate of silicon, known and referred to as TMOS and TEOS, respectively.

The molar ratio between the forerunner of the boron oxide, $B(OR)_3$, and the forerunners of the silicon oxide, $Si(OR)_4$, ranges about from 0.75:1 to 4:1; preferably, this ratio ranges about from 1.75:1 to 2.2:1; more preferably, this ratio is about 2:1.

The concentration of the oxide forerunners is such that from a liter of starting solution an amount is obtained ranging from 30 to 200 grams of oxide of mixed composition. The solution is added with water, in the stoichiometric amount being necessary to the hydrolysis of the forerunners according to the reactions:



The water is added in the form of a HCl or HNO₃ solution, having a concentration of 10⁻³-10⁻¹ M; the acidity favors the reactions II and III.

5 The use is preferred of solutions wherein radicals -OR of Si(OR)₄ and B(OR)₃ compounds are identical, and corresponding to the alcohol used as solvent.

The solution may be used as soon as prepared for obtaining the mixed oxide layer, or stored for a period up to about a week. In case the solution is not used as soon as prepared, it is preferable to keep it until the use at a temperature lower than
10 10 °C.

Once the powders of the coated nitrogenated compound are obtained, standard methods well known in the field are used for the subsequent steps of the production process of the getter devices of the invention (mixing of the powders and introduction and compression thereof into the container).

15 The invention will be further illustrated by the following examples. These non-limiting examples illustrate some embodiments intended to teach those skilled in the art how to work the invention and to represent the best considered way to put the invention into practice.

EXAMPLE 1

20 A Fe₄N powder is prepared, coated with a layer of a B₂O₃ / SiO₂ mixed oxide, using a starting solution wherein the boron/silicon atomic ratio in the forerunners solution is 2:1.

50 g of Fe₄N powder, having a particle size ranging from 8 to 15 μm, are introduced into a metal container. The powder is added, by three consecutive
25 additions each of 5 ml, with 15 ml of a solution obtained by diluting in 1 l of ethyl alcohol 83 g of TEOS, 114 g of boron triethylate and by adding 50.4 ml of an aqueous solution of HNO₃ 10⁻² M. The mixture is continuously stirred for 10 minutes at room temperature. The powders thus obtained are passed through a sieve with holes having a size of 125 μm, and collected in a container kept at 100
30 °C. The operation of sieving and collecting the powders in the heated container is

repeated for five times. The powders thus obtained are the protected nitrogenated compound used in some subsequent tests.

EXAMPLE 2

10 identical getter devices are prepared, by using a container of the type
5 disclosed in patent US 4961040; on the relieves of the container bottom a steel net
is rested having wires with 0.6 mm diameter and 1.54 mm meshes, according to the
modalities disclosed in European patent application publication EP-A-853328. In
each container 1.7 g are poured of a powder mixture comprising 45% by weight of
BaAl₄ having a particle size smaller than 250 µm, 52.6% by weight of nickel
10 powder, 80% of which having a particle size ranging from 10 to 60 µm and the
remaining 20% having a particle size smaller than 10 µm, and 2.4% by weight of a
powder of protected nitrogenated compound obtained as described in Example 1.
The samples thus obtained are subjected to a treatment of five hours in air at 450
°C, simulating the conditions of an extended fritting in the kinescope production.
15 On the samples thus treated, the barium evaporation test is carried out according to
the modalities of the standard test ASTM F 111-72, by heating the devices by
induction for 40 seconds with such a level of inducing current power that the
evaporation starts after 18 seconds. For all the samples, the barium evaporation
does not result in upliftings of the powder packet from the container bottom or
20 fragment detachments; the average barium yield is 330 mg.

These results show the fritting resistance of the getter devices according to
the invention for a time up to five hours.



CLAIMS

1. A nitrogenated evaporable getter device with high fritting resistance, comprising an open metal container wherein there is a mixture of:

- 5 - BaAl_4 , in form of powders having particle size smaller than $250\text{ }\mu\text{m}$;
 - nickel, in form of powders having, at least for 80% by weight, a particle size ranging from 10 to $60\text{ }\mu\text{m}$, the rest consisting of powders having a particle size smaller than $10\text{ }\mu\text{m}$; and

- a third component, in form of powders having a particle size smaller than
10 $125\text{ }\mu\text{m}$, consisting of discrete particles comprising grains of a nitrogenated compound selected among iron nitride (Fe_4N), germanium nitride (Ge_3N_4) or mixed nitrides of iron and germanium, said grains being coated by a thin vitreous layer of a mixed oxide comprising boron oxide (B_2O_3) and silicon oxide (SiO_2), formed through a sol-gel process employing a starting solution wherein the atomic ratio
15 between boron and silicon ranges about from 0.75:1 to 4:1

2. A device according to claim 1, wherein the atomic ratio between boron and silicon in the starting solution ranges about from 1.75:1 to 2.2:1.

3. A device according to claim 2, wherein the atomic ratio between boron and silicon in the starting solution is about 2:1.

- 20 4. A device according to any of the previous claims, wherein the weight ratio between the nitrogenated compound and the vitreous layer in the third component ranges from about 100:2 to 100:5.

5. A process for producing a getter device according to claim 1, comprising the steps of:

- 25 A) coating the grains of a nitrogenated compound selected among iron nitride (Fe_4N), germanium nitride (Ge_3N_4) or mixed nitrides of iron and germanium having a particle size smaller than $30\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ with a vitreous layer of a B_2O_3 / SiO_2 mixed composition, so as to obtain a powder of discrete particles having a particle size smaller than $125\text{ }\mu\text{m}$;

- 30 B) mixing the powder of the particles thus obtained with the BaAl_4 powder, having a particle size smaller than $250\text{ }\mu\text{m}$, and with the nickel powder, at least



80% by weight of which has a particle size ranging from 10 to 60 μm , the rest consisting of powders having a particle size smaller than 10 μm ;

C) introducing the powder mixture thus obtained into an open container and compressing it inside the container by means of a suitably shaped punch.

5 6. A process according to claim 5, wherein the grains of iron nitride (Fe_3N_4), germanium nitride (Ge_3N_4) or mixed nitrides of iron and germanium have a particle size smaller than 15 μm .

7. A process according to claim 5, wherein the coating of the powders of the nitrogenated compound with the vitreous layer is carried out through the following
10 steps:

a) introducing the grains of the dry nitrogenated compound into a container;
b) adding the grains of nitrogenated compound, under continuous stirring, with an alcoholic or hydroalcoholic solution containing forerunners of the boron oxide and of the silicon oxide, such that the atomic ratio between boron and silicon
15 ranges from 0.75:1 to 4:1, thus obtaining a wet slurry of the nitrogenated compound;

c) continuously stirring the slurry at room temperature until dry particles are obtained;

d) mildly grinding the dry particles thus obtained at a temperature comprised
20 between room temperature and about 100 $^{\circ}\text{C}$;

e) sieving the particles thus obtained and collecting the fraction having a particle size smaller than 125 μm .

8. A process according to claim 7, wherein the solution of the oxide forerunners is obtained by using as solvent an alcohol selected among methyl
25 alcohol, ethyl alcohol or isopropyl alcohol; the forerunner of boron oxide is an alcoholate having general formula $\text{B}(\text{OR})_3$, wherein the three -OR groups are identical or different from one another and wherein each R is a primary, secondary or tertiary alkyl radical with a linear or branched chain of up to 5 carbon atoms; the forerunner of the silicon oxide is an alcoholate having general formula $\text{Si}(\text{OR})_4$,
30 wherein the four -OR groups are identical or different from one another and wherein each R is a primary, secondary or tertiary alkyl radical with a linear or



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5 branched chain of up to 5 carbon atoms; the solution is added with 3 moles of water per mole of boron alcoholate and with 4 moles of water per mole of silicon alcoholate, in form of a HCl or HNO₃ solution having a concentration of 10⁻³-10⁻¹ M; and the concentration of the oxide forerunners is such that from 1 liter of starting solution an amount may be obtained ranging from 30 to 200 grams of oxide of mixed composition.

9. A process according to claim 8, wherein the solution of the oxide forerunners is obtained by using ethyl alcohol as the solvent; boron triethylate as the boron oxide forerunner; silicon tetraethylate as the silicon oxide forerunner; and the atomic ratio between boron and silicon is 2:1.