

Description**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

5 [Field of the Invention]

The present invention relates to a zinc alloy powder for use in an alkaline cell and the method to produce the same. More particularly, the present invention is concerned with a non-amalgamated zinc alloy powder for use in an alkaline cell, which has an iron content of 1 ppm or less and contains specific elements added so as to suppress the evolution of hydrogen gas and to improve the leaktightness of a cell, and the method to produce the same.

[Prior Art]

15 The mercury contained in an amalgamated zinc powder used as an anode active material in an alkaline cell has been known to be an essential component for such an active material from the viewpoint of suppressing the evolution of hydrogen gas due to the corrosion of zinc and preventing a liquid from leaking from the cell as a result of the evolution of hydrogen gas.

In light of environmental protection, however, a reduction in the mercury content is required in this field. 20 In line with this requirement, it has become possible to suppress the evolution of hydrogen gas through the addition of not only lead but also aluminum, bismuth, indium and the like as additional elements to zinc so that the mercury content is remarkably reduced from 10 % by weight to about 1 % by weight.

As further social needs, in recent years, it is required to decrease the mercury content of the anode active material to 0 % by weight, in other words, to effect non-amalgamation. This non-amalgamation greatly changes the situation, and it has been difficult to decrease the evolution of hydrogen gas to a desired level even when the above-described additional elements are added. That is, although zinc alloy powders as an anode active material having various types of elements added thereto have been proposed (see, for example, Japanese Patent Laid-Open Nos. 22984/1990 and 153950/1986), it has been impossible to attain the desired suppression of hydrogen gas evolution when the mercury content is 0 % by weight, though such suppression has been possible even when the mercury content is 1 % by weight or less.

Meanwhile, attempts have been made to suppress the evolution of hydrogen gas and to improve the discharge performance by reducing the impurity content of zinc. For example, Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. 123653/1987 describes a reduction in the content of impurities such as iron and chromium. Table 1 on page 4 of the published specification shows that an improvement in the discharge performance while suppressing the evolution of hydrogen gas is attained by reducing the iron content to about 10 ppm in an anode active material which comprises an amalgamated zinc alloy powder containing predetermined amounts of lead, indium and aluminum and containing 1 % by weight of mercury.

However, a zinc alloy powder having a mercury content of 0 % by weight could not attain the desired effect of suppressing the evolution of hydrogen gas even when the impurity content was reduced to about 10 ppm and additional elements such as lead were incorporated.

Thus the non-amalgamation of an anode active material is accompanied by a difficulty which is fundamentally different from that encountered in the low amalgamation leading to a mercury content of 0.6 to 1 % by weight, and there has not been developed any alkaline cell wherein a non-amalgamated zinc alloy powder is used as an anode active material, the evolution of the hydrogen gas is suppressed, and the leaktightness is improved.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention has been made to solve the above-described problems of the prior art. It is an object of the present invention to provide a zinc alloy powder for use in an alkaline cell which substantially suppresses the evolution of hydrogen gas and maintains the discharge performance on a practical level in non-amalgamated cells and the method to produce the same. The final object of the present invention is to improve the leaktightness of a mercury-free alkaline cell.

The present inventors have made intensive studies in line with the above-described objects. As a result, they have found that the objects can be attained by the synergistic effect of the use of zinc having an extremely low content of iron as an impurity and the addition of specific elements thereto, thus accomplishing the present invention.

Thus, according to the present invention there is provided a non-amalgamated zinc alloy powder for use

in an alkaline cell, which alloy powder comprises at least three metals, with zinc forming the balance of the alloy, which at least three metals are selected from bismuth in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, indium in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, lead in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, calcium in an amount of from 0.005 to 0.5% by weight, and aluminium in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, with aluminium being present optionally as an additional metal with combinations of the metals indium, lead and calcium in an amount of up to 0.5% by weight, with calcium optionally being present as an additional metal with combinations of the metals, lead, indium and aluminium in an amount of less than 0.01% by weight, and with indium, lead and aluminium optionally all being absent when the alloy powder contains calcium and bismuth in the said amounts, which alloy contains 1ppm or less of iron.

This invention also provides a non-amalgamated zinc alloy powder for use in an alkaline cell, which comprises 0.01 to 0.5% by weight of lead and 0 to 1.0% by weight in total of at least one metal selected from the group consisting of bismuth, aluminium and calcium, with zinc forming the balance of the alloy, the alloy containing 1 ppm or less of iron.

In preferred embodiments, this invention provides alloy powders embodying this invention which comprises one of the following combinations of elements:

- (1) 0.01 to 0.5 % by weight of bismuth, 0.01 to 0.5 % by weight of indium and 0.01 to 0.5 % by weight of lead,
- (2) 0.01 to 0.5 % by weight of bismuth, 0.01 to 0.5% by weight of indium and 0.005 to 0.5 % by weight of calcium,
- (3) 0.005 to 0.5 % by weight of calcium, 0.01 to 0.5 % by weight of bismuth and 0 to 0.5 % by weight of aluminum,
- (4) 0.01 to 0.5 % by weight of lead, 0.01 to 0.5 % by weight of indium, 0.01 to 0.5 % by weight of calcium and 0 to 0.5 % by weight of aluminum, and
- (5) 0.01 to 0.5 % by weight of lead, 0.01 to 0.5 % by weight of indium, less than 0.01 % by weight of calcium and 0.01 to 0.5 % by weight of aluminum, and the balance being zinc and containing 1ppm or less of iron.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In the present invention, it is a requisite that the iron content be 1 ppm or less. When it exceeds 1 ppm, the effect of suppressing the evolution of hydrogen gas is lowered. The expression "the iron content is 1 ppm or less" used herein means that the iron content is not greater than the limiting analytic value as measured by the conventional analytical methods, such as ICP or atomic absorption spectrometry, without separating iron from zinc. No attempt has hitherto been made to use a zinc or zinc alloy powder having such a low iron content as an anode active material, nor there has been any report describing such use. A high-purity metallic zinc can be prepared for use in special applications such as a semiconductor by special methods such as zone melting. Such a metallic zinc is so expensive that it cannot be used as the raw material of dry cells. Also there is no example wherein such a metallic zinc has been used as an alloy powder. In rectified zinc which is regarded as having the highest purity out of the zinc ingots obtained by industrial mass production, the iron content prescribed in Japanese Industrial Standards is 20 ppm or less. Among the varieties of the rectified zinc, even the one having a particularly low impurity level generally has an iron content of 2 ppm or greater. Further, the iron content of electrolytic zinc is on the same level.

In the present invention, the zinc alloy contains an element component selected from among the above compositions (1) to (6). When the content of each component element falls outside the above-described range, there occur problems such as the failure to attain the desired effect of suppressing the evolution of hydrogen gas or the failure to maintain a practical discharge performance. If elements other than the above-described combinations are added, for example, if aluminum, bismuth, calcium or the like, generally incorporated in a zinc alloy powder used as an anode active material, is added alone, the above-described effects of the present invention cannot be attained.

The production method of the present invention will now be described.

In the present invention, a zinc having an iron content of 1 ppm or less is used. Examples of the zinc having such a low iron content include a deposited zinc obtained by electrolysis and a zinc ingot prepared from zinc obtained by distillation. A zinc ingot prepared by melting deposited zinc together with a flux, such as ammonium chloride, and casting the melt into a mold has hitherto been used as a starting zinc material of an anode active material. In such zinc ingot, it is impossible to decrease the iron content to 1 ppm or less. This is because, in general, zinc is contaminated with iron originating in a separator in the step of removing dross formed on the surface of molten zinc and returning partially recovered zinc to the melt. Further, the contamination with iron may occur from a melt pump, a mold or an atmosphere.

Elements listed in the compositions (1) to (6) described above are dissolved in the melt of a zinc having

a low iron content so as to be within predetermined ranges of contents. Then, pulverization is performed by atomization, followed by sifting, to thereby give a zinc alloy powder. It is preferred from the viewpoint of further improving the suppressing effect of hydrogen gas evolution to limit the iron content of the atmosphere for each of the melting and atomization steps to 0.009 mg/m³ or less. From the same viewpoint, it is also preferred to magnetically separate the obtained zinc alloy powder.

In this manner, the difference between conventional method and method according to the present invention to produce a zinc alloy powder is shown in Table 1 as flow sheet.

Table 1

Flow Sheet

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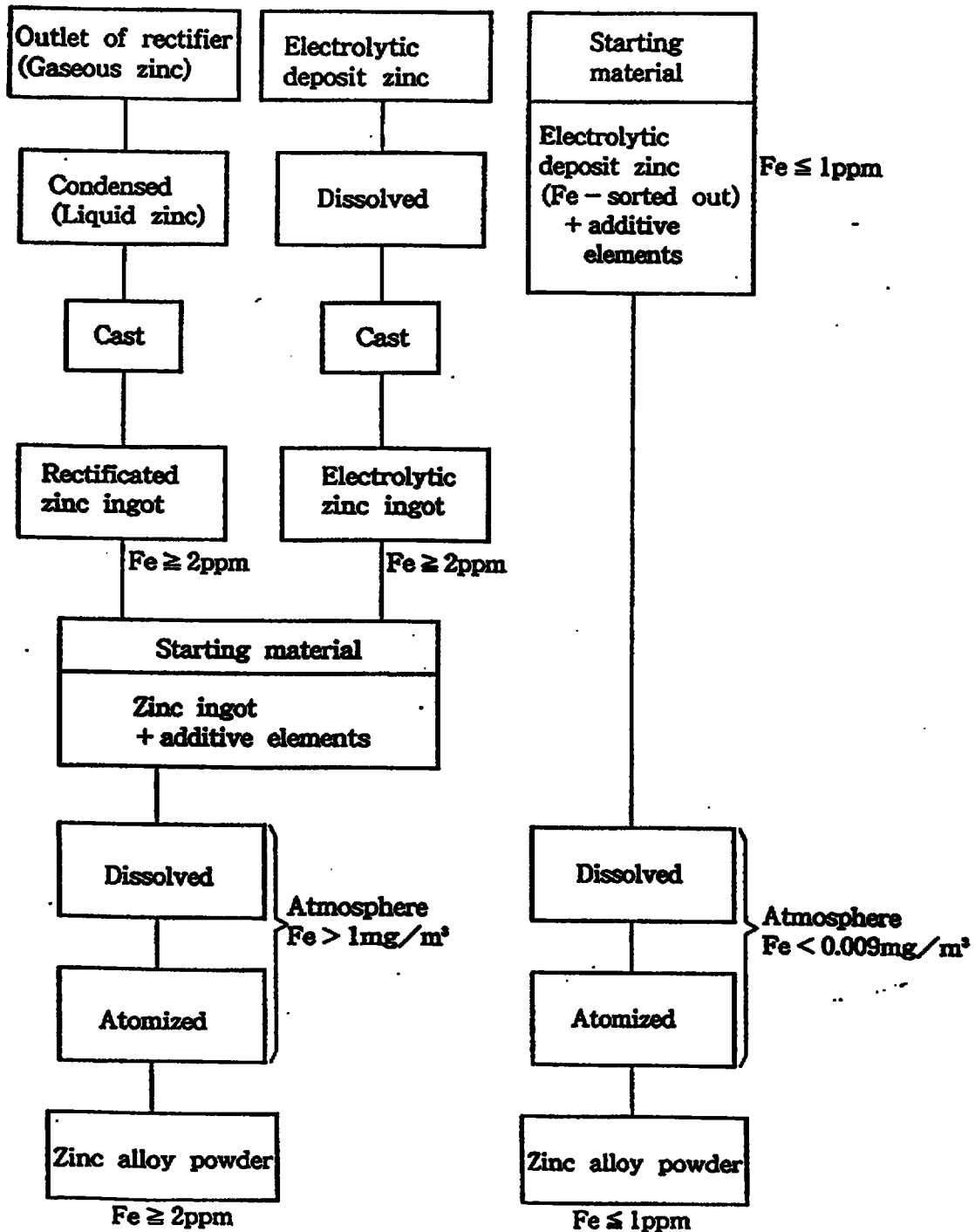
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Conventional Method

Method according to
the present invention

The iron content of the resultant zinc alloy powder is 1 ppm or less as described above. This powder can suppress the evolution of hydrogen gas to about 300 $\mu\text{l/day-cell}$ (type LR6), which is an allowable upper limit of leaktightness, or less.

5 With respect to the mechanism of evolving hydrogen gas, macroscopic measurements of amount of hydrogen gas evolved and presumptive relations between the gas evolution and the structure of crystals have heretofore only been discussed; but, to elucidate said mechanism, there have been made no practical researches into as far as the sites at which the hydrogen gas is evolved. This would be the cause for the fact that various techniques so far applied for a patent were practically unuseful for mercury-free cells, the present inventors thought. Thus, they carefully made microscopic observations and EPMA (Electron Probe X-ray Microanalyzer)
10 analyses of the sites where hydrogen gas was evolved and found that iron, its oxides, alloys and the like in particulate form inevitably contained in zinc powder were sources or causes for evolving hydrogen gas when these particles were present between the zinc particles and/or on the surfaces of the zinc particles.

More specifically, the present inventors microscopically observed that there were specific sites where hydrogen gas was continuously evolved when the zinc powder was immersed in an aqueous solution of potassium hydroxide which was similar to the electrolyte for an alkaline cell. Then, they likewise observed how hydrogen
15 gas was evolved using zinc in the form of comparatively large particles, slender rods or plates to confirm that the gas was evolved at the same sites for a long period of time, after which said sites were marked with a sharp tool. Then, the zinc having said marked sites was analyzed for its composition by EMPA.

As the result of this analysis, it was found that said gas continuous evolution sites necessarily had fine
20 particles of 0.5 - 5 μm in particle size mainly containing iron localized therein. As elements other than iron, there were detected chromium, nickel, silver, sulfur and oxygen in some cases. Thus, it was found that the gas evolution was effected in the presence of a very minute amount of particulate iron and/or iron oxide scattered in the zinc body.

As indicated in the Table 2, particles of various solid materials (other than zinc) having an average particle
25 size of 0.1 - several μm were attached to zinc powder or zinc plates in such an amount that the particles so attached had a concentration of 1 - several ppm, after which the particles - attached zinc samples were immersed in an aqueous solution of potassium hydroxide to observe how hydrogen gas was evolved with the results being shown in Table 2.

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TABLE 2

**Gas Evolution Caused by Various
Kinds of Particles Added to Zinc**

Particles added	State of gas evolution
$\text{Fe}_2 \text{O}_3$ (particles)	Vigorous and continuous
$\text{Fe}_3 \text{O}_4$ (particles)	Vigorous and continuous
$\text{Fe}(\text{OH})_2$ (particles)	Slow and gradual
MnO_2 (particles)	Slow and gradual
NiS (particles)	Slow and gradual
Stainless steel piece	Vigorous and continuous
$\text{Al}_2 \text{O}_3$ (particles)	No evolution
CaO (particles)	No evolution
SiO_2 (particles)	No evolution
Fe (particles)	Vigorous and continuous
Cr (particles)	Slow and gradual
Ni (Particles)	Vigorous and continuous

It was found from the results that the sites where the gas was evolved were those where particulate iron, iron oxides or stainless steel was present.

The above experiment indicated that the sources of gas evolution were the fine particles of mainly iron type.

In the present invention, therefore, the iron content is minimized and predetermined amounts of specific elements are added, whereby a synergistic effect works to suppress the evolution of hydrogen gas.

As described above, a zinc alloy powder for use in an alkaline cell and having an iron content of 1 ppm or less is produced by melting a zinc having an iron content of 1 ppm or less together with specific elements to

give a melt and directly atomizing the melt.

Although this zinc alloy powder is non-amalgamated, it can greatly suppress the evolution of hydrogen gas and maintain the discharge performance on a practical level when it is used as an anode active material of an alkaline cell. Further, since no mercury is contained, the alkaline cell comprising this zinc alloy powder as an anode active material satisfies social needs.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a cross-sectional side view of an alkaline manganese cell according to the present invention.

Figs. 2-12 are graphs showing the difference in the amount of gas evolved between the Examples and the Comparative Examples.

Fig. 13 is a graph showing the relationship between the mercury content of a zinc alloy powder and the rate of hydrogen gas evolution.

PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

The present invention will now be described in more detail with reference to the following Examples and Comparative Examples.

Examples 1 to 36 and Comparative Examples 1 to 7

A melt of zinc alloy was prepared by melting an electrolytically deposited zinc having an iron content of 1 ppm or less at about 500°C and adding thereto predetermined amounts of elements listed in Table 3 in an atmosphere having an iron content of 0.005 mg/m³ in a room. No element was added in Comparative Example 1.

The melt was directly powdered using high-pressure argon gas (ejection pressure: 5 kg/cm²) in the same atmosphere to give zinc alloy powders, which were sifted to give (0.104 to 0.295 mm) 50- to 150-mesh powders.

Using a magnet, magnetic separation was performed to thereby remove free iron powder. All of the obtained zinc alloy powders had an iron content of 1 ppm or less.

An electrolyte was prepared by adding about 1.0 % of carboxymethylcellulose and polysodium acrylate as a gelating agent to a 40 % aqueous potassium hydroxide solution saturated with zinc oxide.

3.0 g of the above-described zinc alloy powder as an anode active material was mixed with 1.5 g of the electrolyte to thereby give a gel. Using the gel as an anode material, the alkaline manganese cell as shown in Fig. 1 was produced.

This alkaline manganese cell was partially discharged by 25 %, and the rate of hydrogen gas evolution due to the corrosion of the zinc alloy powder was measured. The results are given in Table 3. the reason for performing the 25 % partial discharge is that the rate of hydrogen gas evolution is maximized around 25 % partial discharge supposing that the time necessary for discharge to 0.9 V is 100 % for a separately prepared non-mercury alkaline manganese cell. It was supposed that discharge conditions of 1Ω and 11 minutes represent 25 % partial discharge.

The alkaline manganese cell of Fig. 1 is composed of cathode can 1, cathode 2, anode (gelled zinc alloy powder) 3, separator 4, opening sealant 5, anode bottom plate 6, anode electricity collector 7, cap 8, heat-shrinkable resin tube 9, insulating rings 10 and 11 and exterior can 12.

Comparative Examples 8 to 29

A zinc ingot, as a starting material, prepared by casting according to the conventional procedure an electrolytically deposited zinc having an iron content of 1 ppm or less, was melted at about 500°C in an atmosphere having an iron content of 5 mg/m³. Added to the melt were predetermined amounts of elements listed in Table 3 to give zinc alloy melts.

Each of the melts directly powdered using a high-pressure argon (ejection pressure: 5 k/cm²) in the same atmosphere to give zinc alloy powders, which were sifted to give 0.104 to 0.295 mm (50- to 150-mesh) powders.

All of the obtained zinc alloy powders had an iron content of 3 ppm. No magnetic selection was performed.

Using each of the zinc alloy powders, an alkaline cell as shown in Fig. 1 was produced in substantially the same manner as that of Example 1 and 25 % partial discharge was performed to measure the rate of hydrogen gas evolution. The results are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Ex. No.	Added elements (wt.%)					*1	Gas evolution rate ul/cell·day
	Pb	Al	Bi	Ca	In	Fe	
Ex. 1	0.05		0.01		0.05	≤1	182
Ex. 2	0.05		0.05		0.05	≤1	230
Ex. 3	0.05		0.5		0.05	≤1	245
Ex. 4	0.05		0.05		0.01	≤1	237
Ex. 5	0.05		0.05		0.5	≤1	211
Ex. 6	0.01		0.05		0.05	≤1	195
Ex. 7	0.5		0.05		0.05	≤1	193
Ex. 8			0.05	0.01	0.05	≤1	107
Ex. 9			0.05	0.05	0.05	≤1	108
Ex. 10			0.05	0.5	0.05	≤1	135
Ex. 11	0.01					≤1	115
Ex. 12	0.05					≤1	102
Ex. 13	0.5					≤1	98
Ex. 14	0.05	0.01				≤1	91
Ex. 15	0.05	0.05				≤1	87
Ex. 16	0.05	0.5				≤1	124
Ex. 17	0.05		0.01			≤1	163
Ex. 18	0.05		0.05			≤1	180
Ex. 19	0.05		0.5			≤1	205
Ex. 20	0.05			0.01		≤1	117
Ex. 21	0.05			0.05		≤1	122
Ex. 22	0.05			0.5		≤1	135
Ex. 23	0.05	0.05	0.05			≤1	105
Ex. 24	0.05	0.05		0.05		≤1	118
Ex. 25	0.05		0.05	0.05		≤1	113
Ex. 26			0.01	0.05		≤1	198
Ex. 27			0.05	0.05		≤1	208
Ex. 28			0.5	0.05		≤1	227
Ex. 29		0.05	0.05	0.05		≤1	201
Ex. 30	0.05			0.01	0.05	≤1	101
Ex. 31	0.05			0.05	0.05	≤1	103
Ex. 32	0.05			0.5	0.05	≤1	115
Ex. 33	0.05	0.05		0.05	0.05	≤1	95
Ex. 34	0.05	0.05			0.05	≤1	97
Ex. 35			0.025	0.005		≤1	243
Ex. 36			0.025	0.005	0.05	≤1	204

Note *1: ppm only in the case of Fe

Table 3 (continued)

Comp. Ex. No.	Added elements (wt.%)						*1	Gas evolution rate ul/cell·day
	Pb	Al	Bi	Ca	In	Fe		
Comp. Ex. 1						≤1		1728
Comp. Ex. 2				0.05		≤1		750
Comp. Ex. 3			0.05			≤1		581
Comp. Ex. 4					0.05	≤1		787
Comp. Ex. 5	0.05				0.05	≤1		788
Comp. Ex. 6			0.05		0.05	≤1		529
Comp. Ex. 7				0.05	0.05	≤1		472
Comp. Ex. 8				0.05		3		1850
Comp. Ex. 9			0.05			3		2250
Comp. Ex. 10	0.05		0.01		0.05	3		848
Comp. Ex. 11	0.05		0.05		0.05	3		870
Comp. Ex. 12	0.05		0.5		0.05	3		725
Comp. Ex. 13			0.05	0.01	0.05	3		635
Comp. Ex. 14			0.05	0.05	0.05	3		550
Comp. Ex. 15	0.01					3		495
Comp. Ex. 16	0.05					3		481
Comp. Ex. 17	0.5					3		474
Comp. Ex. 18	0.05	0.05				3		503
Comp. Ex. 19	0.05		0.05			3		501
Comp. Ex. 20	0.05			0.05		3		515
Comp. Ex. 21	0.05	0.05	0.05			3		514
Comp. Ex. 22	0.05	0.05		0.05		3		517
Comp. Ex. 23	0.05		0.05	0.05		3		492
Comp. Ex. 24			0.05	0.05		3		524
Comp. Ex. 25		0.05	0.05	0.05		3		531
Comp. Ex. 26	0.05	0.05	0.05			3		477
Comp. Ex. 27	0.05	0.05			0.05	3		488
Comp. Ex. 28	0.05			0.05	0.05	3		473
Comp. Ex. 29	0.05	0.05		0.05	0.05	3		468

Note *1: ppm only in the case of Fe

As shown in Table 3, in all of the zinc alloy powders of Examples 1 to 36 having an iron content of 1 ppm or less and a specific composition, the rate of hydrogen gas evolution is smaller than about 300 μ l/day-cell (type LR6) which is an allowable upper limit of leaktightness. By contrast, in the zinc alloy powders of Comparative Examples 1 to 7, the composition falls outside the scope of the present invention and hence, although the iron content is 1 ppm or less, no effect of suppressing the evolution of hydrogen gas is recognized. Moreover, in the zinc alloy powders of Comparative examples 8 to 29, the iron content is 3 ppm and hence, irrespective of whether or not the composition falls within the scope of the present invention, no effect of suppressing the evolution of hydrogen gas is recognized.

There are attached hereto Figs. 2-12 which show that the present invention has excellent effects on the inhibition of hydrogen gas evolution. In said Figures, numbers each enclosed with a circle refer to the Example numbers respectively; and numbers each enclosed with a square refer to the Comparative Example numbers, respectively.

As is apparent from each of these Figs., an alkaline cell is greatly inhibited from evolving hydrogen gas by using, as an anode active material, zinc alloy powder having an iron content of not more than 1 ppm and containing specified additive elements in respective specified amounts.

Examples 37 to 40

A zinc alloy powder (Example 37) was produced according to the same composition and conditions as those of Example 12, except that no magnetic separation was performed. A zinc alloy powder (Example 38) was produced according to the same composition and conditions as those of Example 12, except that the melting and the atomization were conducted in an atmosphere of 5 mg/m³.

Similarly, a zinc alloy powder (Example 39) was produced according to the same composition and conditions as those of Example 27, except that no magnetic separation was performed. Further, a zinc alloy powder (Example 40) was produced according to the same composition and conditions as those of Example 27, except that the melting and the atomization were conducted in an atmosphere of 5 mg/m³.

All of the zinc alloy powders thus obtained had an iron content of 1 ppm or less. Using each of the zinc alloy powders, an alkaline cell shown in Fig. 1 was produced in substantially the same manner as that of Example 1 and 25 % partial discharge was performed to measure the rate of hydrogen gas evolution. The results are given in Table 4.

Table 4

Ex. No.	Gas Evolution rate ul/cell·day
Ex. 37	102
Ex. 38	102
Ex. 39	208
Ex. 40	208

As is apparent from Table 4, substantially the same results as those of example 12 were obtained in examples 37 and 38, and substantially the same results as those of Example 27 were obtained in Examples 39 to 40.

Experiment

Zinc alloy powders of Example 2 and comparative Example 11 were amalgamated so as to have a mercury content of 1 and 10 % by weight, respectively, thereby producing amalgamated zinc alloy powders.

Using each of the amalgamated zinc alloy powders, an alkaline cell shown in Fig. 1 was produced in substantially the same manner as that of Example 1 and 25 % partial discharge was conducted to measure the rate of hydrogen gas evolution. The results were plotted together with the values of Example 2 and Comparative Example 11 as shown in Fig. 13.

As indicated in Fig. 13., when the iron content is 3 ppm, the evolution of hydrogen gas is below the allowable upper limit of leaktightness at a mercury content of 1 % by weight or greater. By contrast, when the iron content is 1 ppm or less, the evolution of hydrogen gas is below the allowable upper limit of leaktightness irrespective of the presence or absence of mercury.

A similar test was conducted on the zinc alloy powders of Example 12 and Comparative Example 16 to give substantially the same results.

Claims

1. A non-amalgamated zinc alloy powder for use in an alkaline cell, which alloy powder comprises at least three metals, with zinc forming the balance of the alloy, which at least three metals are selected from bismuth in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, indium in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, lead in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, calcium in an amount of from 0.005 to 0.5% by weight,



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As indicated in Fig. 13., when the iron content is 3 ppm, the evolution of hydrogen gas is below the allowable upper limit of leaktightness at a mercury content of 1 % by weight or greater. By contrast, when the iron content is 1 ppm or less, the evolution of hydrogen gas is below the allowable upper limit of leaktightness irrespective of the presence or absence of mercury.

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Claims

1. A non-amalgamated zinc alloy powder for use in an alkaline cell, which alloy powder comprises at least three metals, with zinc forming the balance of the alloy, which at least three metals are selected from bismuth in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, indium in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, lead in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, calcium in an amount of from 0.005 to 0.5% by weight,



- and aluminium in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, with aluminium being present optionally as an additional metal with combinations of the metals indium, lead and calcium in an amount of up to 0.5% by weight, with calcium optionally being present as an additional metal with combinations of the metals, lead, indium and aluminium in an amount of less than 0.01% by weight, and with indium, lead and aluminium optionally all being absent when the alloy powder contains calcium and bismuth in the said amounts, which alloy contains 1ppm or less of iron.
2. A non-amalgamated zinc alloy powder for use in an alkaline cell, which comprises 0.01 to 0.5% by weight of lead and 0 to 1.0% by weight in total of at least one metal selected from the group consisting of bismuth, aluminium and calcium, with zinc forming the balance of the alloy, the alloy containing 1 ppm or less of iron.
 3. A powder as claimed in claim 1, which comprises by weight, 0.01 to 0.5% bismuth, 0.01 to 0.5% indium and 0.01 to 0.5% lead.
 4. A powder as claimed in claim 1, which comprises by weight, 0.01 to 0.5% bismuth, 0.01 to 0.5% indium and 0.005 to 0.5% calcium.
 5. A powder as claimed in claim 1, which comprises by weight, 0.005 to 0.5% calcium, 0.01 to 0.5% bismuth and 0 to 0.5% aluminium.
 6. A powder as claimed in claim 1, which comprises by weight 0.01 to 0.5% lead, 0.01 to 0.5% indium, 0.01 to 0.5% calcium and 0 to 0.5% aluminium.
 7. A powder as claimed in claim 1, which comprises by weight, 0.01 to 0.5% lead, 0.01 to 0.5% indium, less than 0.01% calcium and 0.01 to 0.5% aluminium.
 8. A method of producing a non-amalgamated zinc alloy powder for use in an alkaline cell, having an iron content of not more than 1ppm, which method consists of melting a zinc obtained by electrolysis or by distillation and containing iron in an amount of not more than 1ppm, together with one or more of: aluminium, bismuth, calcium, indium and lead in combinations and the amounts to produce a melt of an alloy as specified in any one of claims 1 and 3 to 7 or with lead in an amount of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight either alone or with 0 to 0.1% by weight in total of at least one member selected from the group consisting of bismuth, aluminium and calcium such that a melt of an alloy as specified in claim 2 is produced, and directly atomising the formed melt.
 9. A method according to claim 8, wherein the melting and the atomization are conducted in an atmosphere having an iron content of 0.009 mg/m³ or less.
 10. A method according to claim 8 or 9, wherein the atomized powder is magnetically separated.
 11. An alkaline cell containing as an anode active material a non-amalgamated zinc alloy powder as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 7.

Patentansprüche

1. Nichtamalgamiertes Zinklegierungspulver zur Verwendung in einer Alkalizelle, wobei dieses Legierungspulver mindestens drei Metalle umfaßt, Zink den Rest der Legierung bildet und diese mindestens drei Metalle ausgewählt sind aus: Wismut in einer Menge von 0,01 bis 0,5 Gew.%, Indium in einer Menge von 0,01 bis 0,5 Gew.%, Blei in einer Menge von 0,01 bis 0,5 Gew.%, Calcium in einer Menge von 0,005 bis 0,5 Gew.% und Aluminium in einer Menge von 0,01 bis 0,5 Gew.%, wobei Aluminium gegebenenfalls als zusätzliches Metall mit Kombinationen der Metalle Indium, Blei und Calcium in einer Menge von bis zu 0,5 Gew.% vorhanden ist, Calcium gegebenenfalls als zusätzliches Metall mit Kombinationen der Metalle Blei, Indium und Aluminium in einer Menge von weniger als 0,01 Gew.% vorhanden ist und Indium, Blei und Aluminium gegebenenfalls alle nicht vorhanden sind, wenn das Legierungspulver Calcium und Wismut in diesen Mengen enthält, wobei die Legierung 1 ppm oder weniger Eisen enthält.
2. Nichtamalgamiertes Zinklegierungspulver zur Verwendung in einer Alkalizelle, das 0,01 bis 0,5 Gew.%



Blei und insgesamt 0 bis 1,0 Gew.% von mindestens einem Metall umfaßt, das aus der Gruppe ausgewählt ist, die aus Wismut, Aluminium und Calcium besteht, wobei Zink den Rest der Legierung bildet und die Legierung 1 ppm oder weniger Eisen enthält.

- 5 3. Pulver nach Anspruch 1, das auf das Gewicht bezogen 0,01 bis 0,5% Wismut, 0,01 bis 0,5% Indium und 0,01 bis 0,5% Blei enthält.
4. Pulver nach Anspruch 1, das auf das Gewicht bezogen 0,01 bis 0,5% Wismut, 0,01 bis 0,5% Indium und 0,005 bis 0,5% Calcium enthält.
- 10 5. Pulver nach Anspruch 1, das auf das Gewicht bezogen 0,005 bis 0,5% Calcium, 0,01 bis 0,5% Wismut und 0 bis 0,5% Aluminium enthält.
6. Pulver nach Anspruch 1, das auf das Gewicht bezogen 0,01 bis 0,5% Blei, 0,01 bis 0,5% Indium, 0,01 bis 0,5% Calcium und 0 bis 0,5% Aluminium enthält.
- 15 7. Pulver nach Anspruch 1, das auf das Gewicht bezogen 0,01 bis 0,5% Blei, 0,01 bis 0,5% Indium, weniger als 0,01% Calcium und 0,01 bis 0,5% Aluminium enthält.
- 20 8. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines nichtamalgamierten Zinklegierungspulvers zur Verwendung in einer Alkalizelle, das einen Eisengehalt von nicht mehr als 1 ppm aufweist, wobei dieses Verfahren umfaßt: Schmelzen von Zink, das durch Elektrolyse oder Destillation erhalten wurde und Eisen in einer Menge von nicht mehr als 1 ppm enthält, zusammen mit einem oder mehreren der Bestandteile: Aluminium, Wismut, Calcium, Indium und Blei in Kombinationen und Mengen, wodurch eine Schmelze einer Legierung nach einem der Ansprüche 1 und 3 bis 7 hergestellt wird, oder mit Blei in einer Menge von 0,01 bis 0,5 Gew.%, entweder allein oder mit insgesamt 0 bis 0,1 Gew.% von mindestens einem Bestandteil, der aus der Gruppe ausgewählt ist, die aus Wismut, Aluminium und Calcium besteht, so daß eine Schmelze einer Legierung nach Anspruch 2 hergestellt wird; und direktes Atomisieren der gebildeten Schmelze.
- 25 9. Verfahren nach Anspruch 8, wobei das Schmelzen und das Atomisieren in einer Atmosphäre mit einem Eisengehalt von 0,009 mg/m³ oder weniger durchgeführt werden.
- 30 10. Verfahren nach Anspruch 8 oder 9, wobei das atomisierte Pulver magnetisch getrennt wird.
11. Alkalizelle, die als aktive Anodenmasse ein nichtamalgamiertes Zinklegierungspulver nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 7 enthält.
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Revendications

- 40 1. Poudre d'alliage de zinc non-amalgamée pour l'utilisation dans une pile alcaline, cette poudre d'alliage de zinc comprenant au moins trois métaux, le zinc constituant le complément de l'alliage, les au moins trois métaux étant choisis parmi le bismuth, en une quantité de 0,01 à 0,5 % en poids, l'indium en une quantité de 0,01 à 0,5 % en poids, le plomb en une quantité de 0,01 à 0,5 % en poids, le calcium en une quantité de 0,005 à 0,5 % en poids, et l'aluminium en une quantité comprise entre 0,01 et 0,5 % en poids, l'aluminium étant présent en option à titre de métal additionnel avec les combinaisons des métaux que sont l'indium, le plomb et le calcium, en une quantité allant jusqu'à 0,5 % en poids, le calcium étant présent en option à titre de métal additionnel avec les combinaisons des métaux que sont le plomb, l'indium et l'aluminium, en une quantité inférieure à 0,01 % en poids et l'indium, le plomb et l'aluminium étant en option tous absents lorsque la poudre d'alliage contient du calcium et du bismuth dans lesdites quantités, ledit alliage contenant 1 ppm ou moins de fer.
- 45 2. Poudre d'alliage de zinc non-amalgamée pour utilisation dans une pile alcaline, comprenant de 0,01 à 0,5 % en poids de plomb et de 0 à 1,0 % en poids dans le total constitué d'au moins un métal choisi dans le groupe composé de bismuth, de l'aluminium et du calcium, le zinc formant le complément de l'alliage, l'alliage contenant 1 ppm au moins de fer.
- 50 3. Poudre selon la revendication 1, comprenant, exprimé en poids, de 0,01 à 0,5 % de bismuth, de 0,01 à 0,5 % d'indium et 0,01 à 0,5 % de plomb.
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4. Poudre selon la revendication 1, comprenant, exprimé en poids, de 0,01 à 0,5 % de bismuth, de 0,01 à 0,5 % d'indium et 0,005 à 0,5 % de calcium.
5. Poudre selon la revendication 1, comprenant, exprimé en poids, de 0,005 à 0,5 % de calcium, de 0,01 à 0,5 % de bismuth et 0 à 0,5 % d'aluminium.
6. Poudre selon la revendication 1, comprenant, exprimé en poids, de 0,01 à 0,5 % de plomb, de 0,01 à 0,5 % d'indium, 0,01 à 0,5 % de calcium et de 0 à 0,5 % d'aluminium.
7. Poudre selon la revendication 1, comprenant, exprimé en poids, de 0,01 à 0,5 % de plomb, de 0,01 à 0,5 % d'indium, moins de 0,01 % de calcium et de 0,01 à 0,5 % d'aluminium.
8. Procédé de fabrication d'une poudre d'alliage de zinc non-amalgamée, pour utilisation dans une pile alcaline, ayant une teneur en fer ne dépassant pas 1 ppm, le procédé consistant à faire fondre du zinc, obtenu par électrolyse ou par distillation, et contenant du fer en une quantité non supérieure à 1 ppm, conjointement avec un ou plusieurs des métaux que sont l'aluminium, le bismuth, le calcium, l'indium et le plomb, en combinaison et en quantité suffisante pour produire un produit en fusion d'un alliage, tel que spécifié dans l'une quelconque des revendications 1 et 3 à 7, ou avec du plomb en une quantité de 0,01 à 0,5 % en poids, soit seul soit avec 0 à 0,1 % en poids au total d'au moins un des matériaux sélectionnés dans le groupe composé de bismuth, aluminium et calcium, de façon à produire un produit en fusion d'un alliage, tel que spécifié dans la revendication 2, et atomiser directement le produit en fusion formé.
9. Procédé selon la revendication 8, dans lequel la fusion et l'atomisation sont effectuées sous atmosphère comprenant 0,009 mg/m³ de fer ou moins.
10. Procédé selon la revendication 8 ou 9, dans lequel la poudre atomisée est séparée magnétiquement.
11. Une pile alcaline contenant, comme matériau actif d'anode, une poudre d'alliage de zinc non-amalgamée, selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 7.