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(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **EPCOS AG** [DE/DE]; St.-Martin-Str. 53, 81669 München (DE).

(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): **KLOIBER, Gerald** [AT/AT]; Wagnitzstr. 16, A-8073 Feldkirchen (AT).
FREIBERGER, Norbert [AT/AT]; Neubaugasse 97, A-8020 Graz (AT).

(74) Agent: **ASSOCIATION OF REPRESENTATIVES; EPPING HERMANN FISCHER PATENTANWALTSGESELLSCHAFT MBH**; Ridlerstr. 55, 80339 München (DE).

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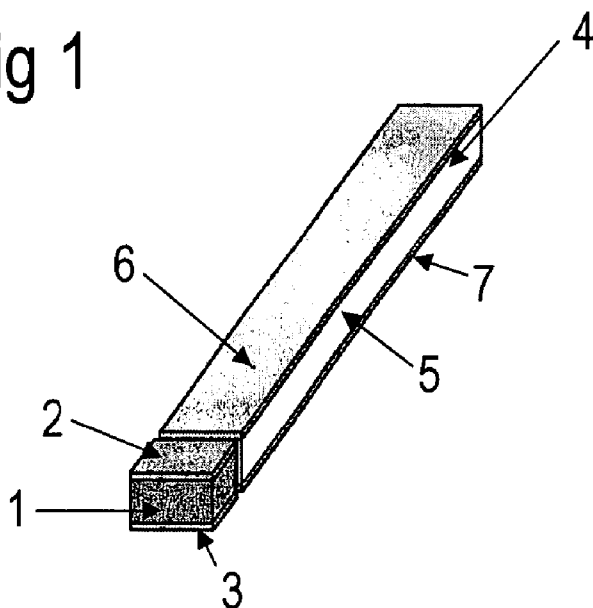
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(54) Title: **SENSOR ELEMENT AND PROCESS FOR ASSEMBLING A SENSOR ELEMENT**

Fig 1



(57) Abstract: A high-temperature sensor element includes at least one thermistor element having at least two contact areas and one contacting element including an isolating ceramic base body and at least two conductor lines. The contact areas of the thermistor element are connected to the conductor lines of the contacting element by an electro conductive bridge. A process for assembling a sensor element is also described in which an thermistor element is connected by a temperature resistant junction to a contacting element, and in which the thermistor element and part of the contacting element adjacent to the thermistor element are sealed by a encapsulation compound.

SENSOR ELEMENT AND PROCESS FOR ASSEMBLING A SENSOR ELEMENT

TECHNICAL FIELD

This patent application relates to a high-temperature sensor
5 element and a process of assembling such a sensor element.

This patent application claims the priorities of US patent
applications No. 61/114,649 and No. 12/613,064, the
disclosure content of which is hereby incorporated by
10 reference.

BACKGROUND

High-temperature sensor elements are used in high temperature
environments having temperatures between $T_{\min}$ and $T_{\max}$, where
15 $T_{\min}$ can be in the range from -55°C to about $+25^{\circ}\text{C}$, and where
 $T_{\max}$ can be in the range from about $+300^{\circ}\text{C}$ to $+1000^{\circ}\text{C}$. High-
temperature sensor elements should have the ability to
measure the surrounding temperature highly accurately and as
fast as possible. For the detection of the temperature, the
20 sensor element should comprise a simple method for
temperature detection like measurement of the resistance.
High-temperature sensor elements have to exist in
environments with high temperature for a long period of time
without significant degeneration. High-temperature
25 environments can be highly oxidizing by the presence of
oxygen from the surrounding air. Thus, the sensor elements
have to be built robust and hard-wearing together with low
building costs.

30 SUMMARY

The high-temperature sensor element comprises at least one
thermistor element, which can be a NTC element or a PTC
element, the thermistor element having at least two contact

areas. The abbreviation NTC stands for Negative Temperature Coefficient Thermistor. These are therefore sensor elements which, at least within a limited temperature interval, have a negative temperature coefficient of the electrical
5 resistance. The abbreviation PTC stands for Positive Temperature Coefficient Thermistor. These are sensor elements which, at least within a limited temperature interval, have a positive temperature coefficient of the electrical
10 resistance. Additionally to the embodiments described in the following with regard to thermistor elements which are formed as NTC elements, in further embodiments the NTC element can be replaced by a PTC element.

The sensor element comprises at least one contacting element
15 comprising a preferably highly isolating ceramic base body and at least two conductor lines. The contact areas of the NTC element are connected to the conductor lines of the contacting element by electro-conductive bridges.

20 In an embodiment, the electro-conductive bridges comprise wire parts electrically connecting the contact areas of the NTC element to the conductor lines of the contacting element. The wire parts are preferably fixed on the contact areas of the NTC element and the conductor lines of the contacting
25 element by a fired conductive compound or by a welding process or by a bonding process.

In an embodiment, the electro-conductive bridges comprise conductive compound electrically connecting the contact areas
30 of the NTC element to the conductor lines of the contacting element.

In another embodiment, the contacting element comprises a ceramic base body formed as a panel or a slat. The ceramic of the base body is preferably based on aluminum oxide (Al_2O_3). The contacting element further comprises metallic
5 conductor lines applied on the ceramic base body by a screen printing method.

In an embodiment, the NTC element and a part of the contacting element adjacent to the NTC element are
10 hermetically sealed by a surrounding encapsulation compound.

In an embodiment, the encapsulation compound comprises ceramic and/or glass.

15 The material of the encapsulation compound preferably has no influence on the electric characteristics of the NTC element.

For the assembling of an above described sensor element, an NTC element is connected by a temperature resistant junction
20 to a contacting element, where the NTC element and a part of the contacting element, adjacent to the NTC element are hermetically sealed by a surrounding encapsulation compound.

In an embodiment of the assembling process, the NTC element
25 may temporarily be fixed to the contacting element by an electrically isolating and high-temperature resistant adhesive.

The temporarily fixed NTC element is then permanently
30 connected to the contacting element in the region of the contact areas and conductor lines by electro-conductive bridges.

In an embodiment, the electro-conductive bridges are formed by a fired conductive compound.

In another embodiment, the electro-conductive bridges are formed by short wire parts which are fixed to the contact areas of the NTC element and the conductor lines of the contacting element. The short wire parts are fixed by a fired conductive compound or by a welding process or by a bonding process.

In another embodiment of the manufacturing process, the NTC element and a part of the contacting element adjacent to the NTC element are placed inside a glass tube. Afterwards, the glass tube is heated until collapsing of the glass tube to a surrounding encapsulation compound.

In another embodiment, the NTC element and a part of the contacting element adjacent to the NTC element are sealed by a ceramic material or by a glass material.

The NTC element of the sensor element may be in the form of a rectangular blade which comprises contacting areas on two opposite sides of the NTC element. To contact the NTC element, a contacting element is used which comprises a highly electrical isolating ceramic base body. On two opposite sides of the ceramic base body, the contacting element comprises electrically conductive conductor lines. The contact areas of the NTC element and the conductor lines of the contacting element on the ceramic base body are made by compounds of silver, silver platinum, gold or platinum. The material of the conductor lines can be different from the material of the contact areas of the NTC element. The metallic compounds are applied by a screen printing method on

the ceramic base body of the contacting element and fired into the ceramic material.

The ceramic base body of the contacting elements may, for example, be made of an aluminum oxide (Al_2O_3) based ceramic. The connection between the NTC element and the connecting element is preferably applied on the metallic surface of the contacting element and the metallic surface of the NTC element.

In an embodiment, the connection may be applied by a short high-temperature stable metallic wire which electrically and mechanically connects the NTC element to the contacting element on the upper and lower surface of the NTC element.

The connection from the metallic wire part to the metallic surface of the ceramic material may be applied by a conductive compound. The compound preferably has contact to the metallic surfaces of the contacting element and the NTC element and to the wire part in between. The compound is preferably fired to apply an electrically conductive connection between the wire part and the metallic surfaces of the contacting element and the NTC element.

In another embodiment, the wire part may, for example, be fixed to the metallic surface of the contacting element and the NTC element by a welding process or by a bonding process. High temperature stable wires comprise, for example, platinum, gold, nickel, iron-nickel compositions or alloys, a special steel sort like 2.4851, coated wires with a core of nickel which are coated, for example, by copper, silver, gold, platinum, coated wires with an iron-nickel core covered by nickel, copper, silver, gold or platinum.

In another embodiment, the electrically conductive connection between the contacting element and the NTC element can be applied by a conductive compound. The contacting element and the NTC element are placed face-to-face with a small amount
5 of conductive compound applied as an electrically conductive bridge between the metallic surface of the contacting element and the NTC element. The conductive compound is preferably dried and fired into the metallic surfaces. The conductive compound can, for example, comprise silver, silver-platinum,
10 gold or platinum compounds.

To advance the mechanical stability of the connection between the contacting element and the NTC element, a high temperature stable adhesive can be applied between the NTC
15 element and the contacting element. Such an adhesive may, for example, be based on zirconium oxide or aluminum oxide.

To support the connection between the NTC element and the contacting element, the NTC element and adjacent part of the
20 contacting element may be surrounded by a encapsulation compound. This encapsulation compound is preferably based on glass or ceramic based adhesives or other encapsulation compounds.

25 In an embodiment, the sensor element is sealed by a glass. The head of the sensor element can be placed inside a glass tube. The glass tube is heated until collapsing and provides a surrounding glass bulb to the NTC element and adjacent parts of the contacting element. The glass tube can be
30 manufactured of melted glass or glass powder.

In another embodiment, it is possible to use glass slurry. The NTC element and adjacent parts of the contacting element

are dipped or, alternatively, molded by the glass slurry. A following heating process leads to a solid surrounding glass encapsulation compound.

- 5 In another embodiment, the NTC element and the adjacent parts of the contacting element are dipped in a ceramic encapsulation compound or covered by a ceramic adhesive. A following heating process leads to a solid encapsulation with a solid cover.

10

The surrounded NTC element has to comprise a highly stabilized temperature characteristic in such a way that the electrical characteristic like the specific resistance and the so-called B value of the NTC element at the environmental
15 temperature are not significantly shifted in time. The conductive surface of the NTC element preferably has no significant contact resistance to the ceramic body of the NTC element combined with a highly stable adhesive force of the conductive surface to the ceramic body. The conductive
20 surface of the NTC element is preferably stable to high-temperatures in case of being covered by encapsulation compounds.

The contacting element preferably comprises a sufficiently
25 high resistance in the upper region of the environmental temperature.

The NTC element and the contacting element are preferably connected in parallel to each other. In order to not distort
30 the signal of the temperature-sensitive NTC element, the resistance of the components of the sensor element has to comply in the range between the minimum and the maximum temperature. The resistance of the contacting element is

preferably greater than the resistance of the NTC element at the range between the minimum and the maximum temperature.

Preferably, the electrically conductive surface of the contacting element may be stable in oxidizing environments like oxygen of the air. During firing of the conductive compound for the electrically conductive bridge or during sealing of the sensor head, temperatures higher than the maximum temperature of the sensor head can be reached.

The conductive surface of the contacting element is preferably high temperature stable in order to cope with possible damaging influences of the aforementioned process. Furthermore, the conductive surface of the contacting element preferably comprises a mechanically highly stable adhesion to the ceramic base body of the contacting element.

The resistance of the conductive surface of the contacting element may have a low resistance according to the resistance of the NTC element for the complete range of temperature. Preferably, the thermal expansion coefficient of the contacting element has to be adjusted to the encapsulation compound of the sensor element in order to avoid the appearance of cracks due to temperature changes.

The electrically conductive bridge is preferably at least in a covered state stable to high temperatures.

The material of the encapsulation compound is in case of a glass compound preferably stable to high temperatures. The transformation temperature of the glass is preferably higher than the maximum temperature of the sensor element.

Preferably, the thermal expansion coefficient of the encapsulation compound is adjusted to the thermal expansion coefficient of the NTC element and the contacting element of the sensor element in order to avoid mechanical damages.

5

In order to not influence the signal of the temperature-sensitive NTC element, the encapsulation compound preferably has a resistance which is at least in the range between $T_{\min}$ and $T_{\max}$ greater than the resistance of the NTC element.

10

In contrast to known sensor elements, the aforementioned sensor element has a simple and robust configuration in common with a high sensitivity for gathering the environmental temperature. Due to its simple design, the above-mentioned sensor element can, according to other sensor elements, be build quite cheaply.

15

Features of the sensor element are shown in more detail with the following detailed description in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

20

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a view of the base of an NTC element and a contacting element in order to show the configuration of these parts.

25

FIG. 2 is a view similar to FIG. 1 where the wire parts are placed on the NTC element and the contacting element.

FIG. 3 is a view of another embodiment of the sensor element where the wire parts are fixed by an electrically conductive compound.

30

FIG. 4 is a view similar to FIG. 3 where the NTC element and adjacent parts of the contacting element are placed inside a glass tube.

FIG. 5 is a view of a sensor element of FIG. 4 where the glass tube is heated and forms a glass bulb.

FIG. 6 is a view of another embodiment of the sensor element where the NTC element and the contacting element are connected to each other by a fired conductive compound.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In FIGS. 1 to 6 an NTC element 1 is shown as thermistor element. Alternatively to the embodiments described in the following, a PTC element can be used instead of the NTC element 1 shown in FIGS. 1 to 6.

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a relative configuration of the NTC element 1 and of the contacting element 4. The NTC element 1 shown in FIG. 1 has a rectangular form. In another embodiment, it is also possible that the NTC element comprises other geometric forms like blades or anything else. The contacting element 4 is shown as a rectangular rod shaped part. The form of the contacting element 4 can also be varied. The thickness and the width of the NTC element 1 and the contacting element 4 do not have to be adjusted to each other. Between the NTC element 1 and the contacting element, a gap can be present. In an embodiment, there can also be no gap between the NTC element 1 and the contacting element 4.

In another embodiment, the gap between the NTC element 1 and the contacting element 4 may be filled by a high temperature stable adhesive to connect the NTC element 1 with the contacting element 4. In such a case, the adhesive would be

placed in the gap between the NTC element 1 and the contacting element 4. The NTC element 1 has contact areas 2, 3 on its upper and lower surfaces. The contacting element 4 comprises a ceramic base body 5 and metallic conductor lines 6, 7 on its upper and lower surface.

In FIG. 2, the configuration of short wire parts 12, 13 are shown. The short wire parts 12, 13 apply an electrically conductive bridge between the NTC element 1 and the contacting element 4. Preferably, the wire parts 12, 13 are placed on the contact areas 2, 3 of the NTC element 1 and the conductor lines 6, 7 of the metallic conductive surface of the contacting element 4.

In FIG. 3, the connection of the wire parts to the NTC element 1 and the contacting element 4 is shown. The embodiment shown in FIG. 3 shows a connection by short wired part 12, 13 and an electrically conductive compound which is dried and fired into the metallic surface of the NTC element 1 and the metallic surface of the contacting element 4. The wire parts 12, 13 and the electrically conductive compound form electro-conductive bridges 8, 9 between the NTC element 1 and the contacting element 4. In an alternative embodiment, the wire parts 12, 13 can be fixed by a welding or bonding process to the NTC element 1 and the contacting element 4.

FIG. 4 shows an embodiment of the sensor element, in which the NTC element 1 and adjacent parts 10 of the contacting element 4 are placed inside a glass tube 14. The glass tube 14 is shifted over the NTC element 1 and adjacent parts 10 of the contacting element 4. Afterwards, the glass tube 14 is heated in such a way that the glass tube 14 is collapsing in

order to form a sealing 11 around the NTC element 1 and adjacent parts 10 of the contacting element 4 , which is shown in FIG. 5. In an alternative embodiment, the NTC element 1 and adjacent parts 10 of the contacting element 4
5 can be dipped in a glass lurk or be molded by glass. In a following heating process, the glass lurk forms a solid sealing 11 around the NTC element 1 and adjacent parts 10 of the contacting element 4. In an alternative embodiment, a ceramic based encapsulation compound or a ceramic adhesive
10 can be used. After a hardening step, the ceramic forms a solid encapsulation compound 11 around the head of the sensor element.

FIG. 6 shows an alternative embodiment of the sensor element
15 in which the electro-conductive bridge 8 between the metallic surface of the NTC element 1 and the metallic surface of the contacting element 4 is applied by an electro-conductive compound which is fired into the metallic surfaces of the NTC element 1 and the contacting element 4.

20

The embodiments described in Fig. 1 to Fig. 6 can preferably be applied for measuring high temperatures.

What is claimed is:

1. A high temperature sensor element comprising:

at least one thermistor element comprising at least two
5 contact areas, wherein the thermistor element is an NTC
element or a PTC element; and

a contacting element comprising an isolating ceramic
base body and at least two conductor lines;

wherein the contact areas of the at least one thermistor
10 element are connected to the at least two conductor lines of
the contacting element by electro-conductive bridges.

2. The sensor element according to claim 1, wherein the
thermistor element and a part of the contacting element

15 adjacent to the thermistor element are sealed by a
encapsulation compound.

3. The sensor element according to claim 1, wherein the
electro conductive bridge comprises wire parts, electrically

20 connecting the contact areas of the thermistor element to the
conductor lines of the contacting element.

4. The sensor element according to claim 3, wherein the wire
parts are fixed on the contact areas and the conductor lines

25 by a fired conductive compound or by a welding process or by
bonding.

5. The sensor element according to claim 1, wherein the
electro-conductive bridge comprises a conductive compound

30 connecting the contact areas of the thermistor element to the
conductor lines of the contacting element.

6. The sensor element according to claim 1, wherein the contacting element comprises a ceramic base body formed as a panel or a slat based on Al_2O_3 and further comprises conductor lines applied on the ceramic base body by a screen printing method.

7. The sensor element according to claim 2, wherein the encapsulation compound comprises ceramic and/or glass.

8. The sensor element according to claim 2, wherein the encapsulation compound has no influence on the electrical characteristics of the thermistor element.

9. A process for assembling a high temperature sensor element, the high temperature sensor element comprising:

at least one thermistor element comprising at least two contact areas, wherein the thermistor element is a NTC element or a PTC element; and

a contacting element comprising an isolating ceramic base body and at least two conductor lines;

wherein the contact areas of the at least one thermistor element are connected to the at least two conductor lines of the contacting element by electro-conductive bridges;

wherein the process comprises:

connecting an thermistor element via a temperature-resistant junction to the contacting element; and
sealing the thermistor element and a neighboring part of the contacting element via a encapsulation compound.

10. The process according to claim 9, wherein the thermistor element is temporarily fixed to the contacting element by an electrically isolating, high temperature resistant adhesive.

5

11. The process according to claim 10, wherein the temporarily fixed thermistor element is connected permanently to the conductor lines of the contacting element in a region of contact areas by electro-conductive bridges.

10

12. The process according to claim 11, wherein the electro-conductive bridge are formed by a fired conductive compound.

15

13. The process according to claim 9, wherein the electro-conductive bridges are formed by short wire parts which are fixed to the contact areas of the thermistor element and the conductor lines of the contacting element by a fired conductive compound or by a welding process or by a bonding process.

20

14. The process according to claim 9, wherein the thermistor element and an adjacent part of the contacting element are placed in a glass tube, and wherein the glass tube is melted to form a encapsulation compound.

25

15. The process according to claim 9, wherein the thermistor element and an adjacent part of the contacting element are sealed by a ceramic material.

1/2

Fig 1

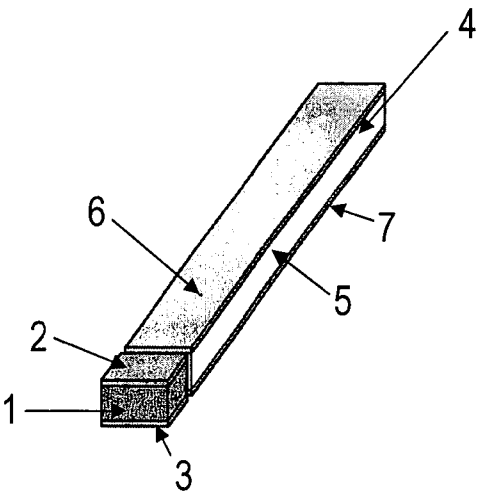


Fig 2

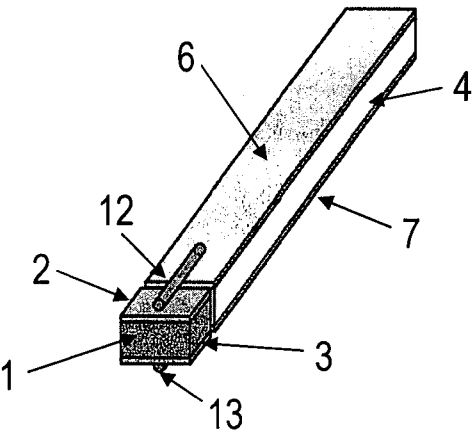
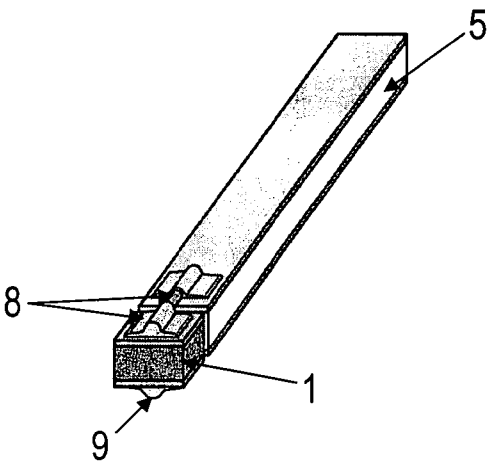


Fig 3



2/2

Fig 4

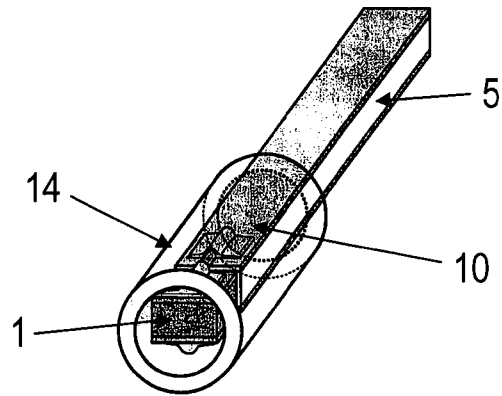


Fig 5

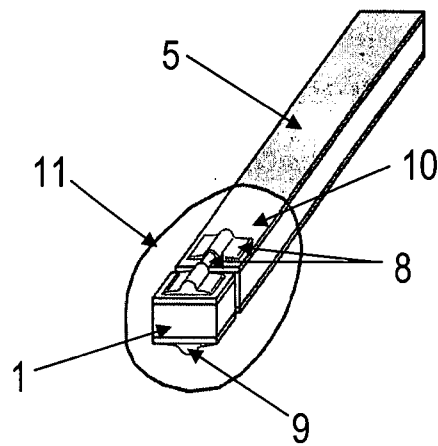
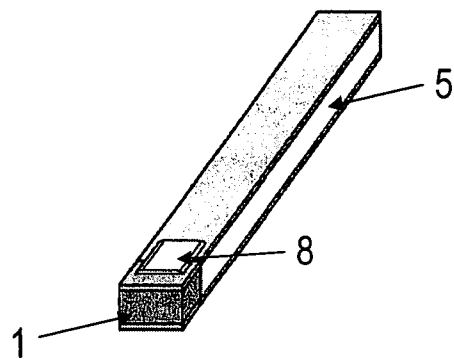


Fig 6



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

PCT/EP2009/064852

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

INV. G01K7/22

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

G01K

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EP0-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	JP 59 019827 A (MATSUSHITA ELECTRIC IND CO LTD) 1 February 1984 (1984-02-01) the whole document	1-4, 7-9, 13
X	JP 57 187630 A (KYOCERA CORP) 18 November 1982 (1982-11-18) the whole document	1-4, 7-9, 13-14
X	US 4 447 799 A (CARLSON) 8 May 1984 (1984-05-08)	1-2, 5-12, 14-15
A	abstract; figures columns 3-7	3-4, 13
A	JP 10 149903 A (MITSUBISHI MATERIALS CORP) 2 June 1998 (1998-06-02) abstract; figures paragraph [0032]	14

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

☒ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

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- "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.
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European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentiaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040,
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Barthélemy, Matthieu

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

PCT/EP2009/064852

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
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