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CA 2080888 C 2003/07/15

(11)(21) **2 080 888**

(12) **BREVET CANADIEN
CANADIAN PATENT**

(13) **C**

(22) Date de dépôt/Filing Date: 1992/10/19

(41) Mise à la disp. pub./Open to Public Insp.: 1993/04/24

(45) Date de délivrance/Issue Date: 2003/07/15

(30) Priorité/Priority: 1991/10/23 (3092/91) CH

(51) Cl.Int.⁵/Int.Cl.⁵ C22B 21/06

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(54) Titre : PROCEDE D'AFFINAGE STRUCTURAL DE PIECES COULEES EN ALLIAGE D'ALUMINIUM, NOTAMMENT
LES PIECES EN ALLIAGES D'ALUMINIUM-SILICIUM

(54) Title: PROCESS FOR GRAIN REFINEMENT OF ALUMINIUM CASTING ALLOYS, IN PARTICULAR
ALUMINIUM/SILICON CASTING ALLOYS

(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

For the grain refinement of aluminium casting alloys, in particular aluminium/silicon casting alloys, gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide are/is added to the melt, optionally in addition to further grain-refinement and/or modification additions. The addition of gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide results in a good grain refinement with low shrink-hole tendency and does not have an adverse effect on modification processes.



Abstract

For the grain refinement of aluminium casting alloys, in particular aluminium/silicon casting alloys, gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide are/is added to the melt, optionally in addition to further grain-refinement and/or modification additions.

The addition of gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide results in a good grain refinement with low shrink-hole tendency and does not have an adverse effect on modification processes.

Process for the grain refinement of aluminium casting alloys, in particular aluminium/silicon casting alloys

5 The invention relates to a process for the grain refinement of aluminium casting alloys, in particular aluminium/silicon casting alloys, by nucleating additions of phosphorus-containing substances to the melt.

10 Depending on solidification type and solidification cycle, a coarse-grained microstructure which has lower strength and ductility than fine-grained microstructure may occur in aluminium alloys. A fine-grained microstructure having better mechanical properties and improved castability can be achieved by nucleating additions to the melt. The grain-refinement agents added react in the melt in accordance with complex processes and act as foreign nuclei.

15 In hypereutectic aluminium/silicon alloys, the grain refinement takes place as a result of phosphorus addition. This involves the refinement of the initially precipitated silicon by aluminium phosphide nuclei. The phosphorus addition takes place as phosphorus pentachloride, in the form of preparations containing red phosphorus and hexachloroethane or as copper and/or iron phosphide.

20 In hypoeutectic and eutectic aluminium/silicon alloys, a finely structured eutectic is achieved by the so-called modification of the lamellar or grained eutectic microstructure. The modification takes place by addition of sodium or strontium to the melt and effects a refinement of the eutectically precipitated silicon. Critical for the appearance of the lamellar or grained microstructure are the cooling rate and the presence of certain elements in low concentration. Thus, a low phosphorus content is decisive for the grained microstructure.

25 The addition of phosphorus to the melt in the form of preparations containing phosphorus pentachloride or red phosphorus does not always result in the desired fine-grained structure of the silicon. An addition as copper phosphide or iron phosphide is not possible if

copper or iron are undesirable as accompanying elements.

In view of these facts, the inventor has set himself the object of providing a process of the type mentioned at the outset which does not have the disadvantages mentioned.

The object is achieved, according to the invention, in that gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide are/is added to the melt.

It has been found that a substantially improved grain-refinement effect is achieved in relation both to the initially precipitated silicon particles in hyper-eutectic and to eutectically precipitated silicon particles in hypoeutectic and eutectic alloys is achieved by the addition of gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide, which results in a substantial improvement of the castability and of the mechanical properties of the alloys.

To ensure the desired grain-refinement effect, the addition of gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide takes place preferably in an amount which corresponds to an addition of 1 to 250 ppm of phosphorus, relative to the melt. In this connection, even an amount of about 1 to 30 ppm of phosphorus is sufficient in hypoeutectic and eutectic alloys. A higher amount, which also rises with increasing silicon content in accordance with the availability of a higher number of nuclei, is necessary in the case of hypereutectic alloys. In practise, it is preferably between about 30 and 150 ppm of phosphorus and in the case of piston alloys having a silicon content of about 13 to 17 % by weight it is, for example, 70 to 80 ppm of phosphorus.

It has been found that the addition of gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide to other grain-refinement and/or modification additions has an additive effect and does not, in particular, adversely effect the modification processes.

The addition of gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide to the melt can take place in the known ways of

adding grain-refinement agents, that is to say, for example, in pure form or in the form of substances containing gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide, as tablets or as prealloys in wire or pig form. An
5 aluminium/gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide alloy or an aluminium/silicon/gallium phosphide and/or indium phosphide alloy may be used as prealloy, it also being possible for the prealloy to be produced by powder metallurgy. The proportion of gallium phosphide and/or
10 indium phosphide in the prealloy is preferably between 0.3 and 50 % by weight, in particular between about 1 and 10 % by weight.

In connection with the present invention, aluminium/silicon casting alloys are understood as
15 meaning aluminium casting alloys containing silicon as main alloying element. The concept of aluminium/silicon casting alloys consequently also implies alloys containing further alloying elements, special additions and commercial impurities, and comprises both primary and
20 remelted alloys. Depending on the field of application, the silicon content of aluminium/silicon casting alloys is between about 2 and 25 % by weight.

The invention is explained in greater detail below by reference to two examples.

25 Example 1

70 kg of an alloy of the type AlSi17Cu4Mg having the composition (% by weight)

Si	16.2	Fe	0.2
Cu	4.4	Ti	0.1
30 Mg	0.6	Al	remainder

is melted at 760°C in an induction furnace. An addition of 70 ppm of P as GaP in pure form took place to one portion of the melt. After a soaking time of 90 min, both melts were cast as round pins of 30 mm diameter. Metal-
35 lographic microsections were prepared from the pins obtained and the particle diameter of the initially

precipitated silicon particles was determined.

The average particle diameter was 60 μm in the case of the alloy without GaP addition and 21 μm in the case of the alloy with GaP addition.

5 Example 2

30 kg of an alloy of the type AlSi12Mg(Sr) having the composition (% by weight)

Si	10.8	Sr	0.04
Mg	0.2	Al	remainder

- 10 were melted at 730°C in an induction furnace. An addition of 8 ppm of P as GaP in pure form took place to one portion of the melt. After a soaking time of 60 min, 12 mm thick cast specimens of size 13 cm × 13 cm were produced from both melts. The particle diameter of the
- 15 eutectic grains was determined on the surface in the specimens obtained. The average grain size was 2.7 mm in the case of the alloy without GaP additions and 0.7 mm in the case of the alloy with GaP addition.

CLAIMS

1. A process for the refinement of aluminum-silicon casting alloys, which comprises adding to a melt of an aluminum-silicon casting alloy a nucleating addition of a phosphorus-containing substance, wherein the phosphorus-containing substance is selected from the group consisting of gallium phosphide, indium phosphide and mixtures thereof, and wherein the nucleating addition corresponds to 1 to 250 ppm of phosphorus
2. A process according to claim 1, wherein the melt is of a hypoeutectic or eutectic alloy and the nucleating addition corresponds to an amount of 1 to 30 ppm of phosphorus, relative to the melt.
3. A process according to claim 1, wherein the alloy is a hypereutectic and the nucleating addition corresponds to an amount of 30 to 150 ppm of phosphorus relative to the melt.
4. A process according to claim 1, wherein a material selected from the group consisting of a grain-refinement addition, a modification addition and mixtures thereof is added to the nucleating addition.
5. A process according to claim 1, wherein the nucleating addition is added to the melt in pure form.
6. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the nucleating addition is added to the melt in tablet form.

7. A process according to claim 1, wherein the nucleating addition is added to the melt as a material selected from the group consisting of aluminum/gallium phosphide, indium phosphide prealloy, aluminum silicon/gallium phosphide and mixtures thereof.

8. A process according to claim 7, wherein the material is one selected from the group consisting of gallium phosphide and indium phosphide in proportion of between 0.3 to 50% by weight.

9. A process according to claim 7, wherein the nucleating addition of the melt takes place as prealloy in wire or pig form.

10. A process according to claim 8, wherein said proportion is 1 to 10% by weight.