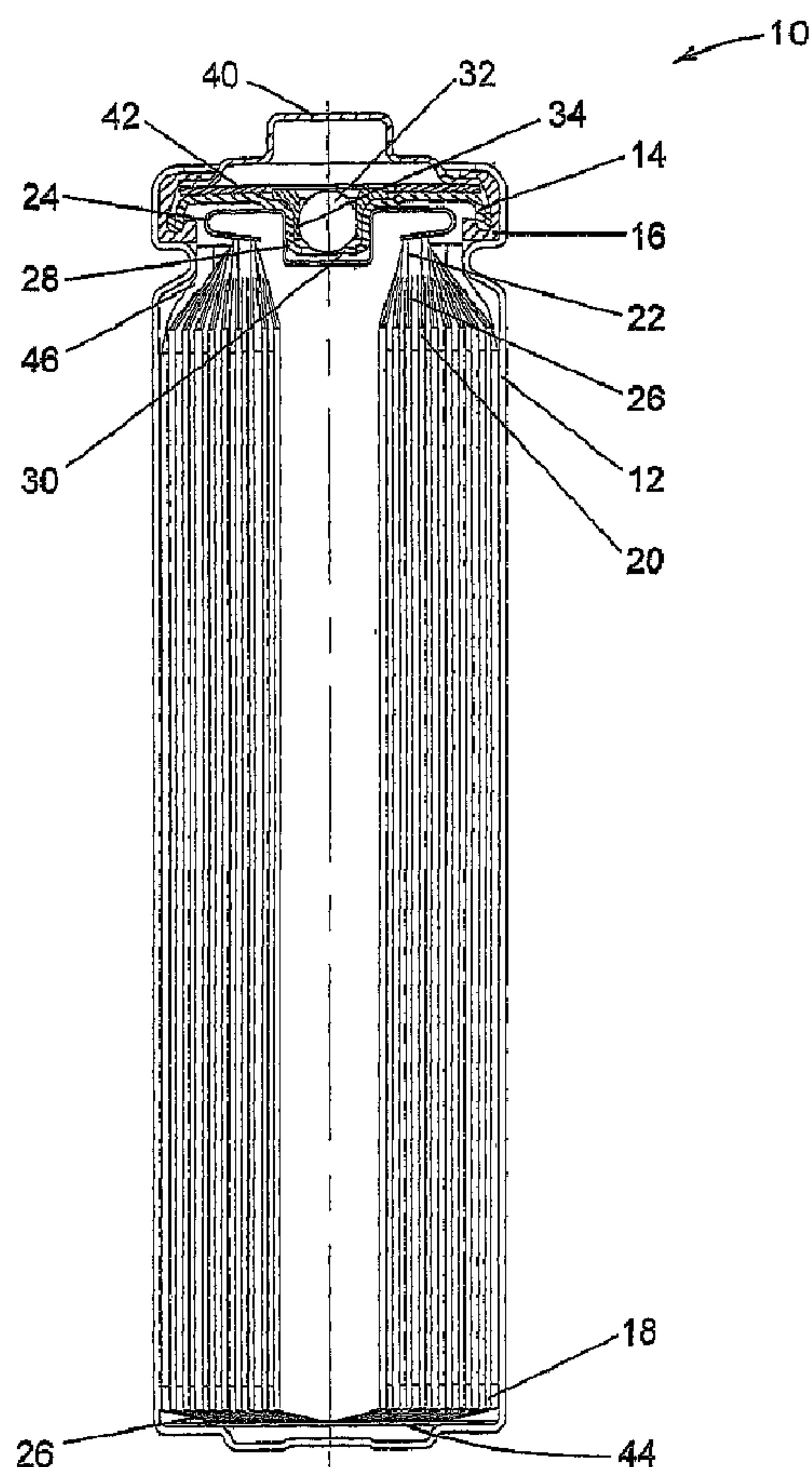




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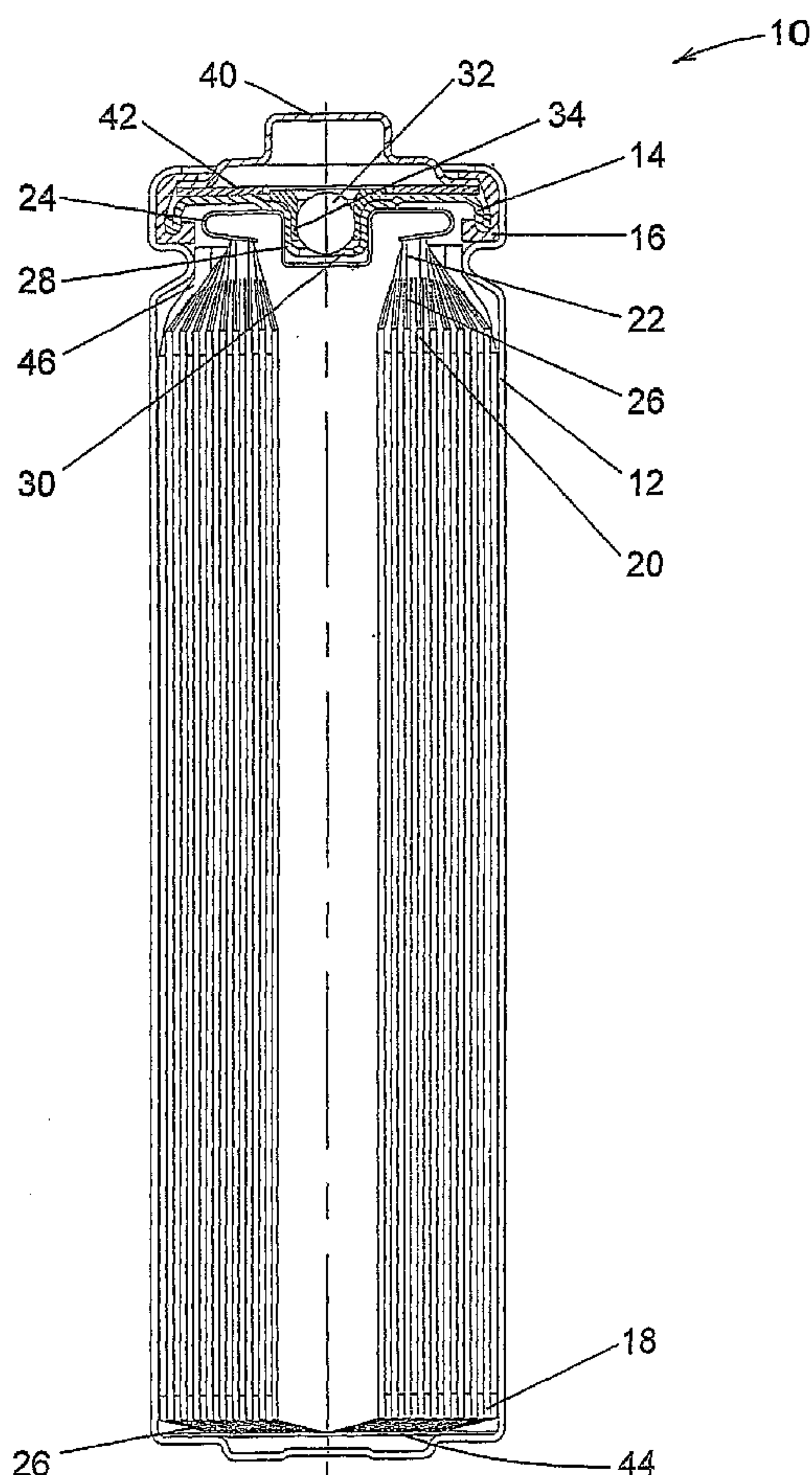
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NONAQUEOUS CELL WITH IMPROVED THERMOPLASTIC SEALING MEMBER

BACKGROUND

This invention relates to an electrochemical battery cell with a nonaqueous organic
5 solvent electrolyte and an improved thermoplastic sealing member.

Nonaqueous battery cells are cells that contain essentially no water. The cell
electrode materials and electrolyte are carefully manufactured, dried and stored prior to
cell manufacturing to maintain the amount of water in those components at typically no
more than tens or hundreds of parts per million. Those manufacturing processes in which
10 cell internal components are exposed to the air are generally performed in a dry box or a
dry room. These measures are necessary because of the high reactivity of one or more of
the cell ingredients with water. Organic compounds are often used as electrolyte solvents
in nonaqueous cells. Examples of nonaqueous cells that contain such organic solvents
include lithium and lithium ion cells, though other types of nonaqueous cells, containing
15 other materials that are highly reactive with water are known.

Batteries containing nonaqueous cells are becoming increasingly popular as power
sources for electronic devices. Though they are often more costly than common aqueous
cells, nonaqueous cells can have many advantages because of the natures of materials
used. These advantages include high energy density, high capacity at low temperatures,
20 low weight and excellent shelf life over a broad range of temperatures. Many nonaqueous
cells also have high electrode interfacial surface area designs that make them especially
well suited for high power (including high current and low resistance) discharge, and the
general trend in power requirements for electronic devices has been toward higher and
higher power. Some of the types of devices for which high capacity on high power
25 discharge is particularly important include photoflash devices (flash units and cameras
with internal flash capability), digital still cameras, video cameras, personal digital
assistant devices and portable computers.

The ability to withstand extreme temperature conditions, including thermal cycling
and thermal shock between high and low temperatures, is becoming more important for
30 nonaqueous cells, particularly lithium and lithium ion cells larger than button cells.

Requirements for lithium and lithium ion cells to tolerate extreme temperature conditions without seal degradation resulting in salting, leakage, excessive weight (electrolyte) loss, venting at low internal cell pressures and excessive capacity loss are increasing. This is true from the standpoint of both the severity of the conditions that the cells must tolerate and the number and types of applications for which such requirements are being set. Cells with thermoplastic seal members made according to the prior art are not able to meet all of these requirements in certain cell types, particularly cells with electrolyte solvents having low boiling points.

A wide variety of cell designs have been used for nonaqueous cells. The type of design is dependent in part on the size of the cell, the type of electrode and electrolyte materials used in the cell and the power requirements of the devices to be powered by the cell. Because the cathode/electrolyte materials are so reactive, the designs for large liquid cathode lithium cells (e.g., lithium-sulfur dioxide (Li/SO₂) and lithium-thionyl chloride (Li/SOCl₂)) often have housings in which metal components are hermetically welded, and glass seals are used to seal metal components that must be electrically insulated and to seal small apertures in the housings. These types of housings tend to be expensive due to the materials and the manufacturing processes and equipment required.

Other means can be used to seal the cells. Because of the relatively low cost and ease of manufacture, it can be desirable to use thermoplastic seal members between rigid housing components. For example, a thermoplastic gasket or grommet can be compressed between the inside top edge of the cell container (e.g., a steel can) and the periphery of the cover closing the open top of the can, forming a seal to keep the electrolyte within the cell housing and to keep water out.

A thermoplastic seal member can also be used to seal an aperture in the cell housing. For example, the thermoplastic seal member may be in the form of a plug sealing a small hole in the cell cover. Electrolyte may be dispensed into the cell after the cover has been assembled to the can. In another example, the plug may be a rigid material, such as a glass or metal ball, with a thermoplastic seal member in the form of a bushing between the inner surface of the aperture and the ball. In these examples, the thermoplastic plug or the ball and bushing may also function as a pressure relief vent for the cell.

Fig. 1 shows an example of a cylindrical lithium cell design that has been used for Li/FeS₂ and other lithium cell types. It has two thermoplastic seal members – a gasket

sealing a cover in the open end of the can and a bushing sealing an aperture in the cell cover. Both thermoplastic seal members provide a compressive seal. Since the can and cover are electrically connected to opposite electrodes within the cell, the gasket also provides the necessary electrical insulation. The bushing and a vent ball comprise a pressure relief vent for the cell. When the internal cell pressure exceeds a predetermined abnormally high level, the vent ball (or the ball and bushing) are forced out of the cover, leaving an opening through which pressure is released. Cells sealed with both a gasket between the can and cover and a pressure relief vent comprising a bushing and vent plug disposed in an aperture in the cell cover are disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,329,405 (issued May 11, 1982), 4,437,231 (issued March 20, 1984), 4,529,673 (issued July 16, 1985), 4,592,970 (issued June 3, 1986), 4,927,720 (issued May 22, 1990) and 4,931,368 (issued June 5, 1990) and 5,015,542 (issued May 14, 1991), the disclosures of which may be referred to for further details.

Thermoplastic seal members are also used in other types of cells, including aqueous electrolyte cells such as common consumer type aqueous zinc-manganese dioxide (Zn/MnO_2), nickel-cadmium (Ni/Cd) and nickel-metal hydride (NiMH) cells.

For any cell type, the seal member material and design must be such that a suitable seal is maintained for an acceptable period of time and under the temperature conditions that the cell is expected to withstand during transportation, storage and use. Common characteristics of a good seal member include stability of the material in the internal cell and external environments, impermeability to the liquids and gases that are to be sealed within or outside the cell, and the formation and maintenance of a complete seal path (i.e., with no voids or gaps) at each seal interface.

For thermoplastic seal members which form a compressive seal, the seal member must be sufficiently compressed to achieve a good seal, and sufficient compression must be maintained for the desired time. Thermoplastic materials under compressive stress tend to relieve that stress. This is referred to as stress relaxation or cold flow of the material. Thermoplastic materials tend to stress relax more at higher temperatures, thereby reducing the time that sufficient compression can be maintained. Temperature also affects the compression of thermoplastic seal members in another way. Different materials will expand and contract by different amounts in response to increases and decreases, respectively, in ambient temperature. In a cell with a thermoplastic seal member forming a compressive seal between more rigid components (e.g., a metal can and a metal cover), it

is generally desirable for the gasket and rigid components being sealed to expand at close to the same rate in order to maintain sufficient gasket compression over the greatest temperature range possible.

Thermoplastic materials and seal designs suitable for nonaqueous cell seal members are more limited than for aqueous cell seal members. Because active materials in the cell are very reactive with water, the seal members must have a higher degree of impermeability to water, and some common materials for aqueous cell seal members are not suitable. Nonaqueous cell seal members must also have a low vapor transmission rate for the electrolyte solvents. Since the vapor transmission rate of thermoplastic material is generally dependent in part upon the vapor pressure of the solvent, low vapor transmission rates are generally more difficult to achieve for nonaqueous cells whose electrolytes contain ethers or other organic solvents with low boiling points. The greater the ratio of the effective cross sectional area of the seal member to the internal volume of the cell, the more important the electrolyte solvent and water transmission rates.

For use in some devices, such as those that may be used in automobile engine compartments and some outdoor environments, batteries must be capable of withstanding very high or very low temperatures. Electrochemical characteristics of some lithium and lithium ion cells make them desirable for use at such temperature extremes. However, seal members used in cells intended for such applications must be able to maintain an acceptable seal at those extreme temperatures. The importance of resistance to the effects of temperature extremes is becoming more important.

Polypropylene (PP) is commonly used a material for lithium cell (e.g., Li/MnO₂ and Li/FeS₂) gaskets. Gaskets have been made with other thermoplastic materials for the purpose of improving the ability of the cell to withstand high temperatures than with PP.

Sano et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,624,771) disclose the use of polyphenylene sulfide (PPS), rather than PP, as a gasket material for a lithium cell to improve resistance of the cell to high temperatures. PPS was used to reduce gasket deformation due to cold flow under the high load conditions the gasket was subjected to in the cell.

In U.S. Patent No. 5,656,392, Sano et al. disclose thermoplastic synthetic resins, PPS and tetrafluoride-perfluoroalkyl vinyl ether copolymer (PFA), as suitable for making a gasket for a cell that is useable at high temperatures and solves conventional problems caused by long-period use and/or storage. Also disclosed are the addition of a glass fiber filler to the resin to extend the stability of the gasket configuration and the addition of

polyethylene (PE) and/or polypropylene (PP) to extend the temperature range that can be tolerated by the cells on a cyclic thermal shock test. However, gaskets containing more than 10 weight percent glass fiber were undesirable because cells made with such highly filled thermoplastic materials leaked on a temperature cycling test. The addition of more than 10 weight percent of PE and/or PP was also undesirable because of cell leakage and a continuously usable temperature of less than 150°C for the gasket.

Both U.S. Patent No. 5,624,771 and U.S. Patent No. 5,656,392 teach that high boiling point solvents such as γ -butyrolactone (boiling point 202°C) and propylene carbonate (boiling point 241°C) can be used as electrolyte solvents to achieve the desired high temperature cell performance and still maintain practical low temperature (-20°C) cell operation in a $\text{Li}/(\text{CF})_n$ coin cell. However, lithium cells with electrolytes containing a large amount of low boiling point solvents do not perform as well on high power discharge, which can be a disadvantage in larger cells intended for use in high power discharge applications.

In U.S. Patent No. 6,025,091 Kondo et al. disclose a cell with a metal can sealed with a metal terminal cap and a gasket comprising polybutylene terephthalate (PBT). The gasket material can be PBT alone, PBT mixed with another polymer or PBT reinforced with inorganic materials such as glass fibers, glass beads and certain organic compounds. Kondo et al. disclose that the invention solves the problems of creeping and cracking of the gasket material when the cell is exposed to high temperature. The preferred cell type was a secondary cell, either with an alkaline or nonaqueous electrolyte (e.g., a lithium ion cell). A particularly preferred electrolyte contained LiCF_3SO_3 , LiClO_4 , LiBF_4 and/or LiPF_6 dissolved in a mixed solvent comprising propylene carbonate or ethylene carbonate and 1,2-dimethoxyethane and/or diethyl carbonate and 1,2-dimethoxyethane and/or diethyl carbonate.

In the mid-1980's Union Carbide Corp. also manufactured a 1/3 N size Li/MnO_2 cell (Type No. 2L76) with a gasket made from PBT (GAFITE® from GAF Chemicals). These cells had a spiral wound electrode design and contained an electrolyte with comprising a mixture of lithium perchlorate and lithium trifluoromethanesulfonate salts in a solvent containing 50 volume percent each of propylene carbonate and 1,2-dimethoxyethane.

The prior art teaches that the ability of cells to withstand a wide range of temperatures, especially high temperatures, can be improved by using gaskets made from materials that maintain dimensional stability and do not crack under extreme temperature conditions. The problem of reducing the rate of transmission of electrolyte solvent through the gasket is not addressed. This problem is
5 generally greater at higher temperatures and with more volatile organic solvents with lower boiling points, such as ethers.

Accordingly, battery cells with improved thermal tolerance characteristics, with little or no adverse effects on other cell characteristics, are desired.
10 Therefore, an object of the present invention is to provide an economically made electrochemical battery cell, with a seal member made from one or more thermoplastic resins, having improved thermal tolerance characteristics, good resistance to loss of electrolyte and entry of water and little degradation in performance after long-term storage.

15 SUMMARY

The invention in one aspect provides an electrochemical battery cell comprising a housing comprising a metal container with at least one open end and at least a first metal cover disposed in the at least one open end of the container, a positive electrode, and a negative electrode. A separator is disposed
20 between the positive and negative electrodes. The cell includes an electrolyte, and a thermoplastic seal member made from a polymeric resin comprising polyphthalamide.

More particularly, it has been discovered that the seal effectiveness of a cell with a thermoplastic seal member from a polymeric resin comprising
25 polyphenylene sulfide blended with from greater than 10 to no greater than 40 weight percent of an impact modifier or with polyphthalamide can provide reduced electrolyte vapor transmission through and around the seal member.

Accordingly, in one aspect the present invention is directed to an electrochemical battery cell comprising a housing comprising a metal container with at least one open end and at least a first metal cover disposed in the at least one open end of the container, a positive electrode, a negative electrode, a
5 separator disposed between the positive and negative electrodes, an electrolyte, and a first thermoplastic seal member made from a polymeric resin comprising at least one member selected from the group consisting of polyphenylene sulfide blended with from greater than 10 to no greater than 40 weight percent of an impact modifier and polyphthalamide.

10 Another aspect of the present invention is an electrochemical battery cell comprising a housing comprising a metal container with an open end and a metal cover disposed in the open end of the container; a positive electrode; a negative electrode; a

separator disposed between the positive and negative electrodes, an electrolyte comprising a solute, the solute comprising lithium and iodide ions, dissolved in a nonaqueous solvent; and a thermoplastic seal member disposed between the metal container and the metal cover. The thermoplastic seal member is made from a polymeric resin comprising at least one member selected from the group consisting of polyphenylene sulfide blended with from greater than 10 to no greater than 40 weight percent of an impact modifier and polyphthalamide.

Yet another aspect of the present invention is an electrochemical battery cell comprising a housing comprising a metal container with an open end and a metal cover disposed in the open end of the container, a positive electrode comprising iron disulfide; a negative electrode comprising metallic lithium; a separator disposed between the positive and negative electrodes; an electrolyte comprising a solute dissolved in a nonaqueous organic solvent, the solute comprising lithium and iodide ions and the solvent comprising at least 80 volume percent of one or more ethers, each having a boiling point no greater than 90°C; and a thermoplastic seal member disposed between the metal container and the metal cover. The thermoplastic seal member is made from a polymeric resin comprising at least one member selected from the group consisting of polyphenylene sulfide blended with from greater than 10 to no greater than 40 weight percent of an impact modifier and polyphthalamide.

These and other features, advantages and objects of the present invention will be further understood and appreciated by those skilled in the art by reference to the following specification, claims and appended drawings.

Unless otherwise specified, the following definitions and methods are used herein:

- aperture means an opening in a material that extends from an area within one surface to an area within an adjacent surface of the material; an open end of a container such as a can or a tube is not an aperture;
- creep strain rate is determined by Dynamic Mechanical Analysis using a Tritec 2000 DMA from Triton Technologies, Ltd., UK, at a test temperature of 85°C; resin is compression molded to form a 0.25 mm thick film and cut to a width of 2.3 mm; the initial gauge length is 2.0 mm, a constant tensile force of 6 N is applied to give a constant tensile stress of 10,000 kPa;

- crimp release pressure means the internal cell pressure at which the cell housing deforms sufficiently to break the container/seal member/cell cover seal and release pressure from the cell;
- coefficient of thermal expansion is determined in the flow direction between 50°C and 90°C according to ASTM E831 and expressed in cm/cm/degree Celsius;
- heat deflection temperature is determined at 18.56 kg/cm² (264 pounds per square inch (psi)) according to ASTM D648 and expressed in degrees C;
- impact modifier means a polymer modifier added primarily to alter the physical and mechanical properties of a thermoplastic material and functioning by absorbing impact energy and dissipating it in a nondestructive fashion; elastomers can be used as impact modifiers, including but not limited to natural rubbers, acrylics and styrenic elastomers, chlorinated polyethylene, EVA copolymers, ethylene-propylene copolymers and terpolymers, polybutadiene and polyisoprene;
- thermal-stabilizing filler is a material which, when added to a base resin, will decrease the resin's coefficient of thermal expansion by at least 20 percent and increase the heat deflection temperature by at least 20°C;
- toughness is determined using a notched Izod impact test according to ASTM D256;
- venting means the opening of the pressure relief vent of a cell; and
- vent pressure means the internal cell pressure at which the pressure relief vent opens to release pressure from the cell.

Unless otherwise specified herein, all disclosed characteristics and ranges are as determined at room temperature (20-25°C), and boiling points are at one atmosphere pressure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the drawings:

Fig. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a cylindrical electrochemical battery cell, with one thermoplastic seal member between the can and cover and another thermoplastic seal member between the cover and vent ball;

Fig. 2 is a cross-sectional view of a test membrane for a vapor transmission rate test; and

Fig. 3 is a graph showing creep strain as a function of time for three resin types at 85°C, with an initial applied stress of 10,000 kPa.

DESCRIPTION

5 The invention will be better understood with reference to Fig. 1, which shows an FR6 type cylindrical battery cell having a housing sealed by two thermoplastic seal members (a gasket and a vent bushing). Cell 10 has a housing that includes a can 12 with a closed bottom and an open top end that is closed with a cell cover 14 and a gasket 16. The can 12 has a bead or reduced diameter step near the top end to support the gasket 16
10 and cover 14. The gasket 16 is compressed between the can 12 and the cover 14 to seal an anode 18, a cathode 20 and electrolyte within the cell 10. The anode 18, cathode 20 and a separator 26 are spirally wound together into an electrode assembly. The cathode 20 has a metal current collector 22, which extends from the top end of the electrode assembly and is connected to the inner surface of the cover 14 with a contact spring 24. The anode 18 is
15 electrically connected to the inner surface of the can 12 by a metal tab (not shown). An insulating cone 46 is located around the peripheral portion of the top of the electrode assembly to prevent the cathode current collector 22 from making contact with the can 12, and contact between the bottom edge of the cathode 20 and the bottom of the can 12 is prevented by the inward-folded extension of the separator 26 and an electrically insulating
20 bottom disc 44 positioned in the bottom of the can 12. Cell 10 has a separate positive terminal cover 40, which is held in place by the inwardly crimped top edge of the can 12 and the gasket 16. The can 12 serves as the negative contact terminal. Disposed between the peripheral flange of the terminal cover 40 and the cell cover 14 is a positive temperature coefficient (PTC) device 42 that substantially limits the flow of current under
25 abusive electrical conditions. Cell 10 also includes a pressure relief vent. The cell cover 14 has an aperture comprising an inward projecting central vent well 28 with a vent hole 30 in the bottom of the well 28. The aperture is sealed by a vent ball 32 and a thin-walled thermoplastic bushing 34, which is compressed between the vertical wall of the vent well 28 and the periphery of the vent ball 32. When the cell internal pressure exceeds a
30 predetermined level, the vent ball 32, or both the ball 32 and bushing 34, are forced out of the aperture to release pressurized gases from the cell 10.

The materials used for cell components depend in part on the cell type, including the electrochemistry. For lithium and lithium ion cells, there are many similarities in suitable materials.

The gasket comprises a thermoplastic material that is resistant to cold flow at high
5 temperatures (e.g., 75°C and above), chemically stable (resistant to degradation, e.g., by dissolving or cracking) when exposed to the internal environment of the cell and resistant to the transmission of air gases into and electrolyte vapors from the cell. Gaskets can be made from thermoplastic resins. Resins used to make gaskets for nonaqueous cells can comprise polyphenylene sulfide and polyphthalamide and combinations thereof as base
10 resins. The base resin and can be blended with modifiers to provide the desired gasket properties. Small amounts of other polymers, reinforcing inorganic fillers and/or organic compounds may also be added to the base resin of the gasket. A preferred base resin is polyphthalamide. In one embodiment, polyphthalamide can be used alone. An example of a suitable polyphthalamide resin is RTP 4000 from RTP Company, Winona, MN, USA.
15 In another embodiment an impact modifier is added to the polyphthalamide. For example, 5 to 40 weight percent of an impact modifier can be added; such a material is available as AMODEL® ET 1001 L from Solvay Advanced Polymers, LLC, Alpharetta, GA, USA. Another preferred base resin is polyphenylene sulfide, to which from greater than 10 to no greater than 40, preferably from greater than 10 to no greater than 30, and more preferably
20 at least 15 weight percent of an impact modifier is added; such a material is available as FORTRON® SKX 382 from Ticona-US, Summit, NJ, USA.

To maintain the desired compression of the gasket between the container and cover, it is generally desirable to use gasket materials with relatively low coefficients of thermal expansion to minimize the effects of temperature. When the CTE is too high
25 excessive overstress (resulting in excessive cold flow) can occur at high temperatures, and excessive contraction can occur at low temperatures. It is also preferable for the CTE's of the container, cell cover and gasket to be relatively close to one another so that dimensions of their interface surfaces will change by about the same amount in response to temperature changes, thereby minimizing the effects on gasket compression over a broad
30 temperature range. The importance of the CTE's of the gasket, container and cell cover materials can be reduced by using a cell cover design like that shown in Fig. 1, where the cover has a generally vertical wall that has some radial spring characteristics.

Heat deflection temperature (HDT) is a measure of a resin's tendency to soften when subjected to heat. The higher the HDT, the more rigid the material remains when heated. Preferably the resin used to make the gasket has an HDT of at least 50, preferably at least 75 and more preferably at least 100°C at a pressure of 18.56 kg/cm².

5 Creep strain rate is another measure of the material's tendency to soften when subjected to heat. The lower the creep strain rate, the more rigid the material remains when heated. When the creep strain rate is too high the material can flow excessively, resulting in a loss of compression of the gasket between the container and cell cover. Ideally the average creep strain rate of the resin is zero. An average creep strain rate of no
10 greater than 0.01 percent/min. between 100 and 200 minutes at 85°C with a constant applied force of 6 N is preferred. More preferably the average creep strain rate is no more than about 0.007 percent/min., and most preferably it is no more than about 0.004 percent/min. Most preferably the average creep strain rate is no more than 0.002 percent/min.

15 The gasket will also be resistant to the forces applied during and after cell manufacturing, when the gasket is initially compressed, to prevent damage, such as cracks through which electrolyte can leak. Impact modifiers can be included in the resin to increase the impact resistance of the material.

To improve the seal at the interfaces between the gasket and the cell container and
20 the cell cover, the gasket can be coated with a suitable sealant material. A polymeric material such as EPDM can be used in embodiments with an organic electrolyte solvent.

The vapor transmission rates of water and the electrolyte solvent should also be low to minimize the entry of water into the cell and loss of electrolyte from the cell. Water in the cell can react with the active materials, and the internal resistance of the cell
25 can increase to an undesirable level if too much electrolyte solvent is lost.

The vent bushing is a thermoplastic material that is resistant to cold flow at high temperatures (e.g., 75°C and above). This can be achieved by including more than 10 weight percent, preferably at least 15 percent, thermal-stabilizing filler in the thermoplastic material. Preferably no more than 40, more preferably no more than 30,
30 weight percent thermal-stabilizing filler is added. The base resin of the thermoplastic material is one that is compatible with the cell ingredients (anode, cathode and electrolyte). The resin can be formulated to provide the desired sealing, venting and processing characteristics. The resin is modified by adding a thermal-stabilizing filler to

provide a vent bushing with the desired sealing and venting characteristics at high temperatures.

Suitable polymeric resins include ethylene-tetrafluoroethylene, polybutylene terephthalate, polyphenylene sulfide, polyphthalamide, ethylene-chlorotrifluoroethylene, chlorotrifluoroethylene, perfluoroalkoxyalkane, fluorinated perfluoroethylene polypropylene and polyetherether ketone. Ethylene-tetrafluoroethylene copolymer (ETFE), polyphenylene sulfide (PPS), polybutylene terephthalate (PBT) and polyphthalamide (PPA) are preferred, especially for use in a cell with an electrolyte solvent containing a large percentage of highly volatile (high vapor pressure, low boiling point) ether compounds.

A suitable thermal-stabilizing filler is one which, when added to the thermoplastic resin, decreases the CTE of the resin by at least 20 percent and increases the HDT of the resin by at least 20°C. Such fillers may be inorganic materials, such as glass, clay, feldspar, graphite, mica, silica, talc and vermiculite, or they may be organic materials such as carbons. It may be advantageous for the filler particles to have a high average aspect ratio, such as fibers, whiskers, flakes and platelets.

Glass can be used as a thermal-stabilizing filler. A preferred type of glass is E-glass. The lengths of the glass fibers will affect the material properties to some extent, particularly the thermal and mechanical properties, more so than the thermal expansion. The fiber length can vary depending on the base resin use. For example, with PBT as the base resin, shorter fibers seem to work well, while with other base resins, longer fibers may be better. The glass fiber length can be controlled in any suitable manner. In general, milling produces shorter fibers than chopping.

It is generally preferred that the wall of the vent bushing between the vent ball and the vent well in the cover be thin (e.g., 0.006 to 0.015 inch as manufactured) and be compressed by about 25 to 40 percent when the bushing and ball are inserted into the cover.

The vent bushing can be manufactured using any suitable process. Injection molding is an example. Because the length of the glass fibers in the thermoplastic material can be reduced during injection molding of the vent bushings, the possible effects on the vent bushing characteristics should be considered before using reground scrap from molding. The molding parameters used should be those that provide a smooth surface on the molded bushings (e.g., Society of the Plastics Industry Standard Surface Finish D3 or

better). Molding parameters will vary with the type of material being molded. For TEFZEL® HT2004 (ETFE resin with 25 weight percent chopped glass filler, from E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, Wilmington, DE, USA), a molding temperature of about 300°F (149°C) and a barrel temperature of about 680°F (360°C) has been found to work well with a fast (greater than about 2.5 in./sec. (6.35 cm/sec.)) injection rate. Additives, such as impact modifiers, may be used.

The mixture of base resin and filler used to make the vent bushing preferably has a heat deflection temperature (HDT) of at least 90°C (preferably at least 150°C and more preferably at least 190°C) and a coefficient of thermal expansion (CTE) between 50 and 90°C of no greater than 7.0×10^{-5} (preferably no greater than 5.0×10^{-5} and more preferably no greater than 3.0×10^{-5}) cm/cm/°C.

To maintain the desired compression of the bushing between the cover and vent ball, it is generally desirable to use materials for the vent bushing that have low coefficients of thermal expansion to minimize the effects of temperature. When the CTE is greater than 5.0×10^{-5} cm/cm/°C, excessive overstress (resulting in excessive cold flow) can occur at high temperatures and excessive contraction can occur at low temperatures. Both of these undesirable conditions can result in insufficient compression in the vent bushing to provide a good seal against the cell cover and the vent ball, leading to loss of electrolyte from the cell, water ingress into the cell and opening of the pressure relief vent under normal storage and use conditions.

It is also preferable for the CTE's of the cell cover, vent ball and vent bushing to be close to one another so that dimensions of the cover, ball and bushing interface surfaces will change by about the same amount in response to temperature changes, thereby minimizing the effects on bushing compression over a broad temperature range.

The heat deflection temperature is a measure of the material's tendency to soften when subjected to heat. The higher the temperature, the more rigid the material remains when exposed to heat. When the HDT is too low the material can flow excessively at high temperatures, resulting in a loss of compression of the vent bushing between the cell cover and the vent ball.

The vapor transmission rates of water and the electrolyte solvent should also be low to minimize the entry of water into the cell and loss of electrolyte from the cell. Water in the cell can react with the active materials, and the internal resistance of the cell can increase to an undesirable level if too much electrolyte solvent is lost.

The cell container is often a metal can with an integral closed bottom, though a metal tube that is initially open at both ends may also be used instead of a can. The can is generally steel, plated with nickel on at least the outside to protect the outside of the can from corrosion. The type of plating can be varied to provide varying degrees of corrosion resistance or to provide the desired appearance. The type of steel will depend in part on the manner in which the container is formed. For drawn cans the steel can be a diffusion annealed, low carbon, aluminum killed, SAE 1006 or equivalent steel, with a grain size of ASTM 9 to 11 and equiaxed to slightly elongated grain shape. Other steels, such as stainless steels, can be used to meet special needs. For example, when the can is in electrical contact with the cathode, a stainless steel may be used for improved resistance to corrosion by the cathode and electrolyte.

The cell cover is typically metal. Nickel plated steel may be used, but a stainless steel is often desirable, especially when the cover is in electrical contact with the cathode. The complexity of the cover shape will also be a factor in material selection. The cell cover may have a simple shape, such as a thick, flat disk, or it may have a more complex shape, such as the cover shown in Fig. 1. When the cover has a complex shape like that in Fig. 1, a type 304 soft annealed stainless steel with ASTM 8-9 grain size may be used, to provide the desired corrosion resistance and ease of metal forming. Formed covers may also be plated, with nickel for example.

The terminal cover should have good resistance to corrosion by water in the ambient environment, good electrical conductivity and, when visible on consumer batteries, an attractive appearance. Terminal covers are often made from nickel plated cold rolled steel or steel that is nickel plated after the covers are formed. Where terminals are located over pressure relief vents, the terminal covers generally have one or more holes to facilitate cell venting.

The vent ball can be made from any suitable material that is stable in contact with the cell contents and provides the desired cell sealing and venting characteristic. Glasses or metals, such as stainless steel, can be used. The vent ball should be highly spherical and have a smooth surface finish with no imperfections, such as gouges, scratches or holes visible under 10 times magnification. The desired sphericity and surface finish depend in part on the ball diameter. For example, in one embodiment of a Li/FeS₂ cell, for balls about 0.090 inch (2.286 mm) in diameter the preferred maximum sphericity is 0.0001 inch (0.00254 mm) and the preferred surface finish is 3 microinches (0.0762 μm) RMS

maximum. For balls about 0.063 inch (1.600 mm) in diameter, the preferred maximum sphericity is 0.000025 inch (0.000635 mm), and the preferred maximum surface finish is 2 microinches (0.0508 μm) RMS.

5 In one embodiment of an FR6 Li/FeS₂ cell according to Fig. 1, the upstanding side wall of the gasket is 0.0205 inch (0.521 mm) thick as manufactured. The diameters of the cell cover, gasket and crimped can are such that the gasket is compressed by about 30 percent of its original thickness to provide a good seal. The gasket is preferably coated with a sealant such as ethylene propylene diene terpolymer (EPDM), but other suitable sealant materials can be used. The initial vent bushing wall thickness is 0.0115 inch
10 (0.292 mm). It is compressed by about 30 to 35 percent of its original thickness in the sealed cell. A sealant could be used between the vent bushing and the cell cover or between the vent bushing and the vent ball, or a sealant could be applied over the cover, bushing and ball to improve the seal, but preferably no sealant is used in order to avoid adversely affecting cell venting or the vent pressure.

15 An anode for a lithium cell contains lithium metal, often in the form of a sheet or foil. The composition of the lithium can vary, though the purity is always high. The lithium can be alloyed with other metals, such as aluminum, to provide the desired cell electrical performance. When the anode is a solid piece of lithium, a separate current collector within the anode is generally not used, since the lithium metal has a very high
20 electrical conductivity. However, a separate current collector can be used to provide electrical contact to more of the remaining lithium toward the end of cell discharge. Copper is often used because of its conductivity, but other conductive metals can be used as long as they are stable inside the cell.

An anode for a lithium ion cell includes one or more lithium-intercalable materials
25 (capable of insertion and deinsertion of lithium ions into their crystalline structure). Examples of suitable materials include, but are not limited to carbons (e.g., graphitic, mesophase and/or amorphous carbons), transition metal oxides (e.g., those of nickel, cobalt and/or manganese), transition metal sulfides (e.g., those of iron, molybdenum, copper and titanium) and amorphous metal oxides (e.g., those containing silicon and/or
30 tin). These materials are generally particulate materials that are formed into the desired shape. Conductive materials such as metal, graphite and carbon black powders may be added to improve electrical conductivity. Binders may be used to hold the particulate materials together, especially in cells larger than button size. Small amounts of various

additives may also be used to enhance processing and cell performance. The anode generally includes a current collector; copper is a common choice. The current collector may be a thin metal foil sheet, a metal screen, an expanded metal or one or more wires. The anode mixture (active material and other ingredients) can be combined with the current collector in any suitable manner. Coating and embedding are examples.

Because lithium and lithium alloy metals are typically highly conductive, a separate current collector within the anode is often unnecessary in lithium and lithium alloy anodes. When an anode current collector is required, as is often the case in lithium ion cells, the current collector can be made from a copper or copper alloy metal.

A cathode for a lithium cell contains one or more active materials, usually in particulate form. Any suitable active cathode material may be used. Examples include FeS_2 , MnO_2 , CF_x and $(\text{CF})_n$.

A cathode for a lithium ion cell contains one or more lithium-intercalated or lithium-intercalable active materials, usually in particulate form. Any suitable active lithium-intercalated or lithium-intercalable material may be used, alone or in combination with others. Examples include metal oxides (e.g., those of vanadium and tungsten), lithiated transition metal oxides (e.g., those including nickel, cobalt and/or manganese), lithiated metal sulfides (e.g., those of iron, molybdenum, copper and titanium) and lithiated carbons.

In addition to the active material, a cathode for a lithium or lithium ion cell often contains one or more conductive materials such as metal, graphite and carbon black powders. A binder may be used to hold the particulate materials together, especially for cells larger than button size. Small amounts of various additives may also be used to enhance processing and cell performance.

A cathode current collector may be required. Aluminum is a commonly used material.

Any suitable separator material may be used. Suitable separator materials are ion-permeable and electrically nonconductive. They are generally capable of holding at least some electrolyte within the pores of the separator. Suitable separator materials are also strong enough to withstand cell manufacturing and pressure that may be exerted on them during cell discharge without tears, splits, holes or other gaps developing. Examples of suitable separators include microporous membranes made from materials such as polypropylene, polyethylene and ultrahigh molecular weight polyethylene. Preferred

separator materials for Li/FeS₂ cells include CELGARD® 2400 microporous polypropylene membrane (from Celgard Inc., Charlotte, NC, USA) and Tonen Chemical Corp.'s Setella F20DHI microporous polyethylene membrane (available from ExxonMobile Chemical Co, Macedonia, NY, USA). A layer of a solid electrolyte or a polymer electrolyte can also be used as a separator.

Electrolytes for lithium and lithium ion cells are nonaqueous electrolytes. In other words, they contain water only in very small quantities (e.g., no more than about 500 parts per million by weight, depending on the electrolyte salt being used) as a contaminant. Suitable nonaqueous electrolytes contain one or more electrolyte salts dissolved in an organic solvent. Any suitable salt may be used, depending on the anode and cathode active materials and the desired cell performance. Examples include lithium bromide, lithium perchlorate, lithium hexafluorophosphate, potassium hexafluorophosphate, lithium hexafluoroarsenate, lithium trifluoromethanesulfonate and lithium iodide. Suitable organic solvents include one or more of the following: dimethyl carbonate, diethyl carbonate, methylethyl carbonate, ethylene carbonate, propylene carbonate, 1,2-butylene carbonate, 2,3-butylene carbonate, methyl formate, γ -butyrolactone, sulfolane, acetonitrile, 3,5-dimethylisoxazole, n,n-dimethyl formamide and ethers. The salt/solvent combination will provide sufficient electrolytic and electrical conductivity to meet the cell discharge requirements over the desired temperature range. While the electrical conductivity is relatively high compared to some other common solvents, ethers are often desirable because of their generally low viscosity, good wetting capability, good low temperature discharge performance and good high rate discharge performance. This is particularly true in Li/FeS₂ cells because the ethers are more stable than with MnO₂ cathodes, so higher ether levels can be used. Suitable ethers include, but are not limited to acyclic ethers such as 1,2-dimethoxyethane, 1,2-diethoxyethane, di(methoxyethyl)ether, triglyme, tetraglyme and diethyl ether; and cyclic ethers such as 1,3-dioxolane, tetrahydrofuran, 2-methyl tetrahydrofuran and 3-methyl-2-oxazolidinone.

Specific anode, cathode and electrolyte compositions and amounts can be adjusted to provide the desired cell manufacturing, performance and storage characteristics.

The invention is particularly useful for cells having electrolyte solvents with a very high level (e.g., a total of at least 80 volume percent) of ethers with very low boiling points (e.g., no greater than 90°C at sea level). The advantage is even greater when the

volume percent of ethers in the solvent is at least 90 percent, and even more so with at least 98 volume percent ethers in the solvent.

The cell can be closed and sealed using any suitable process. Such processes may include, but are not limited to, crimping, redrawing, colleting and combinations thereof.

5 For example, for the cell in Fig. 1, a bead is formed in the can after the electrodes and insulator cone are inserted, and the gasket and cover assembly (including the cell cover, contact spring and vent bushing) are placed in the open end of the can. The cell is supported at the bead while the gasket and cover assembly are pushed downward against the bead. The diameter of the top of the can above the bead is reduced with a segmented
10 collet to hold the gasket and cover assembly in place in the cell. After electrolyte is dispensed into the cell through the apertures in the vent bushing and cover, a vent ball is inserted into the bushing to seal the aperture in the cell cover. A PTC device and a terminal cover are placed onto the cell over the cell cover, and the top edge of the can is bent inward with a crimping die to hold retain the gasket, cover assembly, PTC device and
15 terminal cover and complete the sealing of the open end of the can by the gasket.

The above description is particularly relevant to FR6 type cylindrical Li/FeS₂ cells with nonaqueous electrolytes and to pressure relief vents comprising a thermoplastic bushing and vent ball. However, the invention may also be adapted to other types of cells, such as non-cylindrical (e.g., prismatic) cells, cells with other active materials, cells with
20 other electrolyte solvents (e.g., water) and cells with other pressure relief vent designs. For example, the aperture and pressure relief vent can be located in a cell cover or the container. The aperture can be defined by a uniform opening, such a straight cylindrical opening, or it may be nonuniform, with a reduced diameter opening in one section, such as the aperture in the cell cover in Fig. 1. The seal member sealing the aperture in the
25 housing can be a thermoplastic plug, or it can be a bushing into which a plug is inserted. The plug can be of any suitable solid shape, including but not limited to, a sphere, an ellipsoid, an ovoid and a cylinder. Cells according to the invention can have spiral wound electrode assemblies such as that shown in Fig. 1, another electrode configuration, such as folded strips, stacked flat plates, bobbins and the like.

30 The invention and its features and advantages are further illustrated in the following examples.

Example 1

Gaskets for FR6 type cells similar to the gasket shown in Fig. 1 were injection molded from polypropylene homopolymer (PROFAX® 6524), polybutylene terephthalate (VALOX® 310), ethylene tetrafluoroethylene copolymer (TEFZEL® 2185),
 5 polyphenylene sulfide with 15 weight percent impact modifier (FORTRON® SKX 382) and polyphthalamide with 10-30 weight percent impact modifier (AMODEL® ET 1001 L) and are referred to below as PP, PBT, ETFE, PPS and PPA gaskets, respectively.

Example 2

10 FR6 type Li/FeS₂ cells were made according to Fig. 1 and the above description, except that the cell covers (14) did not have vent holes (30), so vent bushings and vent balls were not used. Cells were made with PP, PBT, ETFE, PPS and PPA gaskets from Example 1. The cells had the following features (quantitative values are design averages):

- can material – diffusion annealed, low carbon, aluminum killed, SAE 1006 steel,
 15 ASTM 9 to 11 grain size, equiaxed to slightly elongated shape; nickel plated; about 0.010 inch (0.254 mm) thick, to provide a 0.0095 inch (0.241 mm) thick can wall;
- can CTE about 1.25×10^{-5} cm/cm/°C;
- cell cover material – 0.013 inch (0.330 mm) thick type 304 soft annealed stainless steel; ASTM 8-9 grain size; post-plated with nickel;
- 20 • cell cover CTE – 1.72×10^{-5} cm/cm/°C;
- cell cover vent well inside diameter – 0.105 inch (2.67 mm);
- gasket wall thickness – 0.0205 inch (0.521 mm);
- gasket sealant coating material – EPDM with 56% ethylene and 9% diene;
- gasket compression – about 32 percent of the initial gasket wall thickness;
- 25 • electrolyte composition – 9.14 weight percent LiI solute in a solvent blend of 63.05 weight percent DIOX, 27.63 weight percent DME and 0.18 weight percent DMI (65 : 35 : 0.2 by volume);
- electrolyte quantity – 1.6 g; and
- cell internal void volume – 10 percent.

Example 3

Cells from Example 2 made with each of the gasket types were tested to determine the amount of weight loss during storage at reduced pressure followed by thermal shock. Some cells with each gasket type were tested in an upright orientation (as shown in Fig. 1), and others were inverted.

Cells were first stored for about 6 hours at room temperature and a pressure of about 11.6 kPa; weight loss was not significant. In the thermal shock portion of the test, cells were stored for 6 hours at 75°C, followed by storage for 6 hours at -40°C; this was repeated 10 times, with no more than 30 minutes between the test temperature extremes; after temperature cycling the cells were stored for 24 hours at room temperature. For three of the gasket types (PP, PPS and PPA), three lots of cells, made at different times, were tested; for the other two gasket types (PBT and ETFE), only one lot of each was made and tested. The change in mass was determined for each cell. The average weight loss results are summarized in Table 1 for each cell lot. The average weight loss was better for cells with PBT, ETFE, PPS and PPA gaskets than for cells with PP gaskets, with cells made with PBT and PPA gaskets being the best overall. There was no substantial difference in average weight loss due to cell orientation during the test.

Table 1

Gasket Type	PP	PBT	ETFE	PPS	PPA
Average	0.0081	---	---	0.0099	0.0000
Weight	0.0079	---	0.0032	0.0104	0.0012
Loss (g)	0.0090	0.0010	---	0.0059	0.0010

Example 4

Cells from Example 3 were stored for 3 weeks at 85°C and then weighed to determine the amount of additional weight loss after storage at 85°C. Some cells were stored in an upright orientation (as shown in Fig. 1), and others were inverted. The average weight losses are shown for each lot of cells with PP, ETFE and PPA gaskets in Table 2. The average additional weight loss was significantly less for cells with ETFE, PPS and PPA gaskets than for cells with PP gaskets. Some of the cells with each gasket

type were autopsied and examined. The PBT gaskets had cracks on the surfaces that had been exposed to the electrolyte in the cells, indicating degradation of the material.

Table 2

Gasket Type	PP	ETFE	PPS	PPA
Average Weight Loss (g)	0.0700 0.0748	--- 0.0093	0.0328 0.0368	0.0018 0.0005

5

Example 5

Gaskets made with different grades of PBT were submerged in various solutions at 70°C and examined periodically to determine the source of the cracking observed in Example 4. The results are summarized in Table 3; “fail” indicates cracking after 7 days or less, and “pass” indicates no cracking after 60 days. Gaskets with all PBT grades tested failed when tested in the electrolyte used in the cells in Example 2. Gaskets did not fail when tested in solutions that did not contain both lithium and iodide ions in a nonaqueous solvent.

10

Table 3

Solute Type and Concentration (moles/liter solvent)	Solvent Components and Volume Ratio	Gasket Material	Results
Li I 0.75	DIOX:DME:DMI 65:35:0.2	VALOX® 310	fail
Li I 0.75	DIOX:DME:DMI 65:35:0.2	CELANEX® 1600A	fail
Li I 0.75	DIOX:DME:DMI 65:35:0.2	VALOX® HR326	fail
Li I 0.75	DIOX:DME 65:35	CELANEX® 1600A	fail
none	DIOX:DME:DMI 65:35:0.2	VALOX® 310	pass
none	DIOX:DME:DMI 65:35:0.2	CELANEX® 1600A	pass
LiCF ₃ SO ₃ 1.0	DIOX:DME:DMI 65:35:0.2	CELANEX® 1600A	pass
KI saturated	DIOX:DME:DMI 65:35:0.2	CELANEX® 1600A	pass
NaI 0.75	DIOX:DME:DMI 65:35:0.2	CELANEX® 1600A	pass
LiI 0.75	distilled water	CELANEX® 1600A	pass

Example 6

Tables 5 and 6 show properties of materials used in Example 1. Table 5 shows
5 typical CTE, HDT and toughness characteristics for the grades of PP, PBT, PPS and PPA
shown, where available.

Table 5

Material Type	Material Grade	CTE (cm/cm/°C) $\times 10^{-5}$	HDT at 18.56 kg/cm ² (°C)	Toughness (Joules/m)
PP	PRO-FAX® 6524	---	---	37
PBT	VALOX® 310	8.1	54	54
ETFE	TEFZEL® HT2185	12.6	74	(no break)
PPS	FORTRON® SKX 382	8.4	82	507
PPA	AMODEL® ET 1001 L	7.5	120	960

Table 6 shows the vapor transmission rates (VTR) of water and the desired organic electrolyte (9.14 wt% LiI solute in a solvent blend of 63.05 wt% 1,3-dioxolane, 27.63 wt% 1,2-dimethoxyethane and 0.18 wt% 3,5-dimethylisoxazole) through a number of thermoplastic materials at room temperature (RT), 60°C and 75°C. The vapor transmission rates were determined using the following method, adapted from ASTM E96-80 (Standard Test Method for Water Vapor Transmission of Materials):

1. mold a thermoplastic test membrane according to the membrane 100 in Fig. 2, where the height, outside diameter and inside diameter at wall 101 are suitable for providing a seal between the bottle and seal in steps 2 and 5 below, the membrane thickness between wall 101 and hub 103 is 0.020 inch (0.508 mm) and the test surface area (step 9 is the surface area of the membrane between wall 101 and hub 103 [for the serum bottle and seal described in the examples in steps 2 and 5 below, a suitable test membrane has a wall outside diameter of 0.770 inch (19.56 mm), a wall inside diameter of 0.564 inch (14.33 mm), a hub diameter of 0.127 inch (3.23 mm), a hub length of 0.075 inch (1.91 mm) below the lower test surface and a test surface area of 0.237 in.² (1.529 cm²)];
2. put about 8 ml of liquid (water or electrolyte) into a 15 ml bottle (e.g., Wheaton Serum Bottle, 25 mm diameter x 54 mm high, Cat. No. 06-406D);
3. apply sealant (e.g., G.E. Silicone II for testing at up to 60°C; vacuum grease for testing at up to 75°C) to the lip of the bottle;
4. place the test membrane over the top of the bottle;

5. place a seal with a 5/8 inch (15.88 mm) diameter center hole (e.g., Wheaton Aluminum Seal Cat. No. 060405-15) over the test membrane and crimp the seal tightly onto the bottle;
6. weigh the sealed bottle;
- 5 7. store the bottle at the desired test temperature and reweigh (at room temperature) at regular intervals (e.g., monthly for 6 months at room temperature; daily for 2 weeks at 60°C and 75°C);
8. determine the total weight loss (use a negative value to indicate a weight gain) over the test period;
- 10 9. calculate the vapor transmission rate in $\text{g} \cdot 0.001 \text{ in.} / \text{day} \cdot 100 \text{ in.}^2$ ($\text{g} \cdot 0.0254 \text{ mm} / \text{day} \cdot 0.65416 \text{ cm}^2$) using the average total weight loss from step 8 (excluding any individual samples that are extremely high due to loss of seal) and the formula $[(\text{ave. weight loss in grams/day})(\text{membrane thickness in inches}/1000)(100)/(\text{test surface area of membrane})]$, where day = 24 hours; and
- 15 10. perform steps 2-9 on an empty bottle, and correct the calculated vapor transmission rate for the test liquid by subtracting the result from step 9 for the empty bottle from the result from step 9 for the bottle containing the test liquid.

20 The PP material had the lowest water vapor transmission rate at room temperature, but its electrolyte vapor transmission rate at 60°C and 75°C was much higher than any of the others. The electrolyte vapor transmission rates for the PPS and PPA materials were substantially lower than those of PBT and ETFE.

Table 6

Material Type	Material Grade	VTR ($\text{g} \cdot 0.0254 \text{ mm} / \text{day} \cdot 0.65416 \text{ cm}^2$)					
		Water			Electrolyte		
		RT	60°C	75°C	RT	60°C	75°C
PP	PRO-FAX® 6524	0.2	7	18	8	437	1394
PBT	VALOX® 310	1	11	35	4	129	372
ETFE	TEFZEL® HT2185	0.6	7	20	6	140	314
PPS	FORTRON® SKX 382	0.5	4	9	---	15	97
PPA	AMODEL® ET 1001 L	0.7	10	29	---	59	120

Example 7

Test samples made from the PP, PPS and PPA resins used in Example 1 were tested at 85°C to determine the tensile creep strain rate of those resins. The testing was done using a Tritec 2000 DMA (Triton Technologies, Ltd., UK). The test samples were made by compression molding the virgin resin to form a 0.25 mm thick film and then cutting individual samples 2.3 mm wide. An initial gauge length of 2.0 mm was used, and a constant tensile force of 6 N (tensile stress of 10,000 kPa) was applied. The results are plotted in the graph in Fig. 3, which shows the percent creep stain as a function of time. After application of the initial tensile stress, a flat line indicates a creep strain rate of zero (i.e., no material flow). The average creep strain rate for a given time interval (e.g., between 100 and 200 minutes) is calculated by subtracting the creep strain at 100 min. from the creep strain at 200 min. and dividing the difference by 100 min. The creep strain values at 100 and 200 minutes and the average creep strain rate are shown in Table 7. The average creep strain rates of the PPS and PPA materials were substantially better than that of PP, with PPA being the best.

Table 7

Material Type	Material Grade	Creep Strain at 100 min. (%)	Creep Strain at 200 min. (%)	Ave. Creep Strain Rate (%/min.) x 10 ⁻³
PP	PRO-FAX® 6524	41.7	43.2	15
PPS	FORTRON® SKX 382	2.9	3.2	3
PPA	AMODEL® ET 1001 L	7.4	7.4	0

Although the present invention has been described in considerable detail with reference to certain preferred versions thereof, other versions are possible. Therefore, the spirit and scope of the appended claims should not be limited to the description of the preferred versions contained herein.

Each feature disclosed in this specification (including the accompanying claims, abstract, and drawings) is one example only of a generic series of equivalent or similar features, and each of the features disclosed may be replaced by alternative features serving the same, equivalent or similar purpose, unless expressly stated otherwise.

Claims:

1. An electrochemical battery cell (10) comprising:
 - a housing comprising a metal container (12) with at least one open end and at least a first metal cover (14) disposed in the at least one open end of the container (12);
 - a positive electrode (18);
 - a negative electrode (20);
 - a separator (26) disposed between the positive (18) and negative electrodes (20);
 - an electrolyte, and
 - a thermoplastic seal member made from a polymeric resin comprising polyphthalamide.
2. The cell (10) as defined in claim 1, wherein the polyphthalamide is blended with an impact modifier.
3. The cell (10) as defined in claim 2, wherein the resin comprises 5 to 40 weight percent of the impact modifier.
4. The cell (10) as defined in claim 1, wherein the electrolyte is a nonaqueous electrolyte.
5. The cell (10) as defined in claim 4, wherein the electrolyte comprises an organic solvent.
6. The cell (10) as defined in claim 4, wherein the electrolyte comprises a solute comprising lithium and iodide ions.

7. The cell (10) as defined in claim 6, wherein the solute comprises lithium iodide.
8. The cell (10) as defined in claim 5, wherein the organic solvent comprises at least one ether compound.
9. The cell (10) as defined in claim 8, wherein the organic solvent comprises at least 80 volume percent of one or more ethers each having a boiling point no greater than 90 °C.
10. The cell (10) as defined in claim 1, wherein the negative electrode (20) comprises at least one member of the group consisting of lithium, a lithium alloy and a lithium intercalation compound.
11. The cell (10) as defined in claim 1, wherein the positive electrode (18) comprises at least one member of the group consisting of iron disulfide, manganese dioxide and a lithium intercalation compound.
12. The cell (10) as defined in claim 1, wherein the at least one thermoplastic seal member is disposed between the container (12) and the first metal cover (14).
13. The cell (10) as defined in claim 1, wherein the resin has an average creep strain rate, at 85 °C, between 100 and 200 minutes after application of a constant tensile stress of 10,000 kPa, of no greater than 0.002 percent per minute.
14. The cell (10) as defined in claim 1, wherein the at least one thermoplastic seal member comprises a first seal member, disposed between the container (12) and the first metal cover (14), and a second seal member, disposed in an aperture in the first metal cover (14).

15. The cell (10) as defined in claim 14, wherein the polymeric resin from which the second seal member is made further comprises greater than 10 weight percent of a thermal-stabilizing filler.

16. The cell (10) as defined in claim 15, wherein the polymeric resin from which the second seal member is made comprises polyphthalamide.

17. An electrochemical battery cell (10) comprising:

- a housing comprising a metal container (12) with an open end and a metal cover (14) disposed in the open end of the container (12);

- a positive electrode (18);

- a negative electrode (20);

- a separator (26) disposed between the positive (18) and negative electrodes (20);

- an electrolyte comprising a solute dissolved in a nonaqueous organic solvent, the solute comprising lithium and iodide ions; and

- a thermoplastic seal member disposed between the metal container (12) and the metal cover (14), wherein the thermoplastic seal member is made from a polymeric resin comprising polyphthalamide.

18. The cell (10) as defined in claim 17, wherein the lithium iodide is dissolved in a solvent comprising at least 80 volume percent of one or more ethers, each having a boiling point no greater than 90 °C.

19. The cell (10) as defined in claim 18, wherein the negative electrode (20) comprises a lithium alloy and the positive electrode comprises iron disulfide.

20. The cell (10) as defined in claim 17, wherein the resin comprises polyphthalamide blended with an impact modifier.

21. The cell (10) as defined in claim 20, wherein the resin comprises 5 to 40 weight percent of the impact modifier.

22. An electrochemical battery cell (10) comprising:

a housing comprising a metal container (12) with an open end and a metal cover (14) disposed in the open end of the container (12);

a positive electrode (18) comprising iron disulfide;

a negative electrode (20) comprising metallic lithium;

a separator (26) disposed between the positive (18) and negative electrodes (20);

an electrolyte comprising a solute dissolved in a nonaqueous organic solvent, the solute comprising lithium and iodide ions; and the solvent comprising at least 80 volume percent of one or more ethers, each having a boiling point no greater than 90 °C; and

a thermoplastic seal member disposed between the metal container (12) and the metal cover (14), wherein the thermoplastic seal member is made from a polymeric resin comprising polyphthalamide.

23. The cell as defined in claim 22, wherein the solute comprises lithium iodide.

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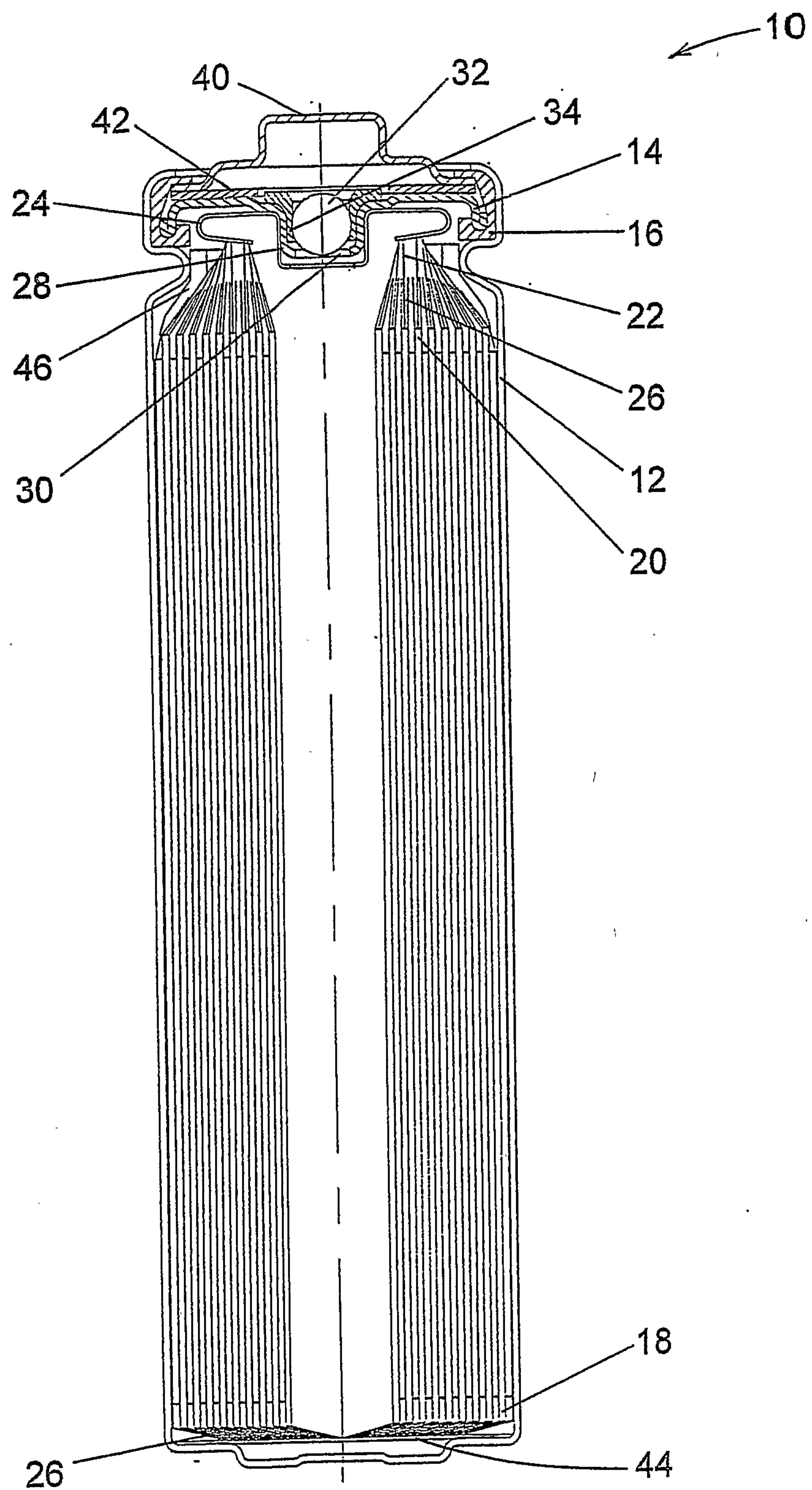


FIG. 1

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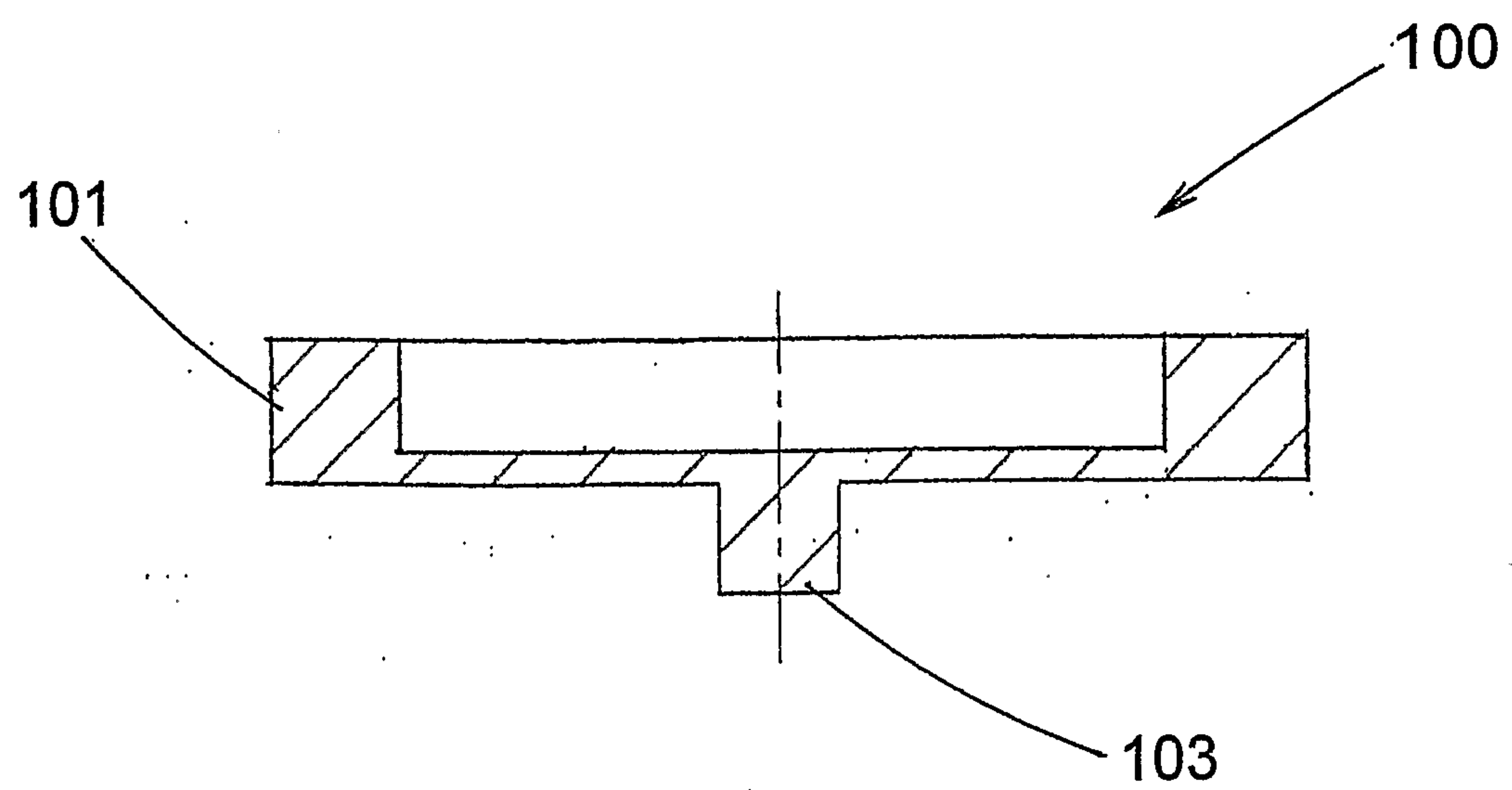


FIG. 2

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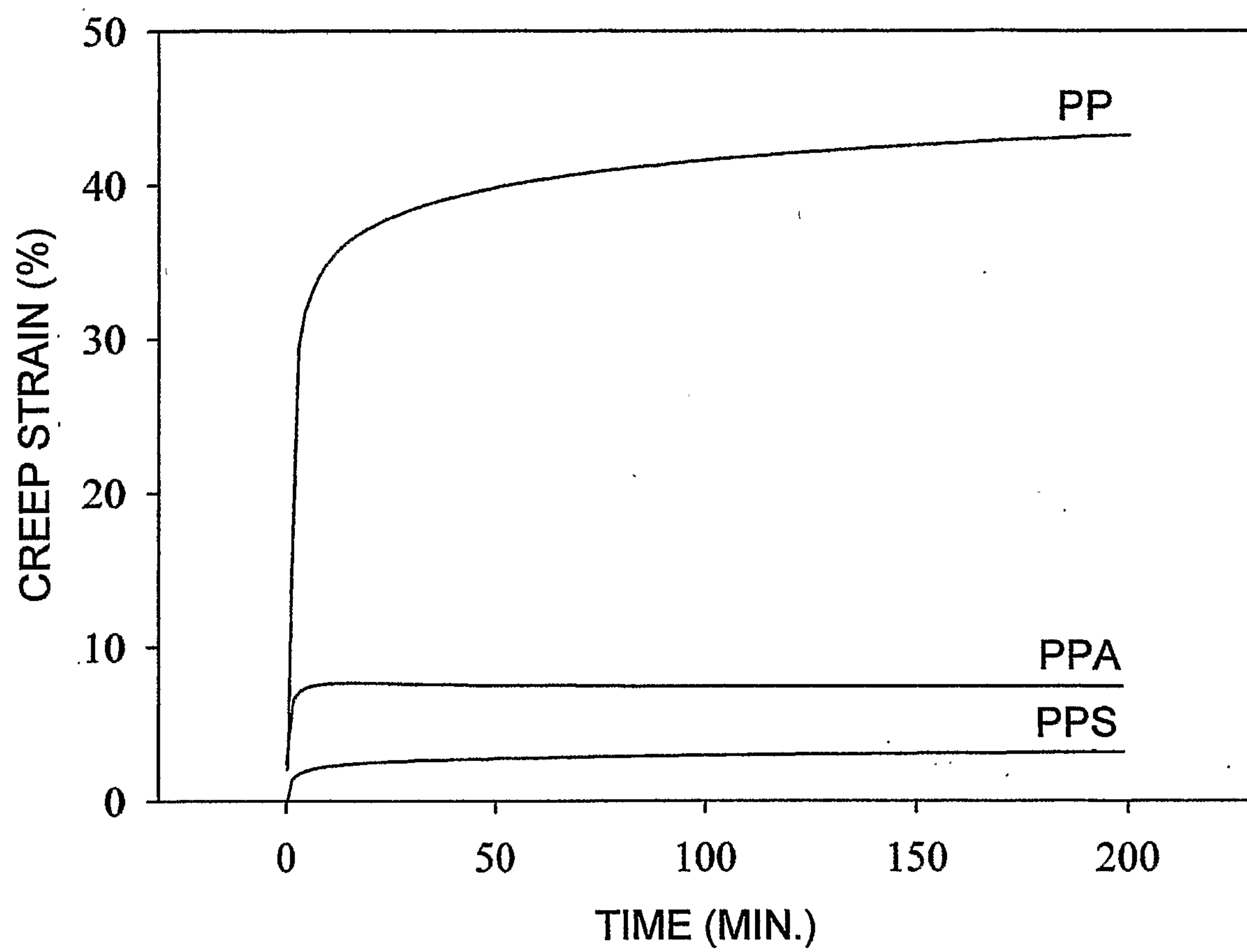


FIG. 3

