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(54) SUPERCONDUCTING Bi-Sr-Ca-Cu OXIDE COMPOSITONS AND PROCESS FOR MANUFACTURE

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JAPANESE JOURNAL OF APPLIED PHYSICS, vol. 27, no. 2, February 1988; H. MAEDA et al., pp. l209-l210

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Description

This invention relates to novel bismuth-strontium-calcium-copper oxide compositions which are superconducting and to a process for making them.

References

Bednorz and Muller, Z. Phys. B64, 189 (1986), disclose a superconducting phase in the La-Ba-Cu-O system with a superconducting transition temperature of about 35 K. This disclosure was subsequently confirmed by a number of investigators [see, for example, Rao and Ganguly, Current Science, 56, 47 (1987), Chu et al., Science 235, 567 (1987), Chu et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 58, 405 (1987), Cava et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 58, 408 (1987), Bednorz et al., Europhys. Lett. 3, 379 (1987)]. The superconducting phase has been identified as the composition $La_{1-x}(Ba,Sr,Ca)_xO_{4-y}$ with the tetragonal K_2NiF_4-type structure and with x typically about 0.15 and y indicating oxygen vacancies.

Wu et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 58, 908 (1987), disclose a superconducting phase in the Y-Ba-Cu-O system with a superconducting transition temperature of about 90 K. Cava et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 58, 1676 (1987), have identified this superconducting Y-Ba-Cu-O phase to be orthorhombic, distorted, oxygen-deficient perovskite $YBa_2CU_3O_{9-\delta}$ where δ is about 2.1 and present the powder x-ray diffraction pattern and lattice parameters.

C. Michel et al., Z. Phys. B - Condensed Matter 68, 417 (1987), disclose the introduction of Bi into the superconductor $La_{2-x}Sr_xCuO_{4-y}$ to form the oxides $La_{2-x}Bi_xSr_{x-x'}CuO_{4-y}$. The study was limited to compositions corresponding to the range where superconductivity was mainly observed, x - x' = 0.1-0.2. Single phases were obtained when $x \leq 3$ and $x' \leq 2$. One sample of composition $La_{1.7}Bi_{0.1}Sr_{0.2}CuO_{4-y}$ has a superconducting transition temperature of about 42 K as determined from resistivity measurements as compared with about 38 K for $La_{1.8}Sr_{0.2}CuO_{4-y}$.

C. Michel et al., Z. Phys. B - Condensed Matter 68, 421 (1987), disclose a novel family of superconducting oxides in the Bi-Sr-Cu-O system with composition close to $Bi_2Sr_2Cu_2O_{7+\delta}$. A pure phase was isolated for the composition $Bi_2Sr_2Cu_2O_{7+\delta}$. The X-ray diffraction pattern for this material exhibits some similarity with that of perovskite and the electron diffraction pattern shows the perovskite subcell with the orthorhombic cell parameters of a = 5.32 A (0.532 nm), b = 26.6 A (2.66 nm) and c = 48.8 A (4.88 nm). The material made from ultrapure oxides has a superconducting transition with a midpoint of 22 K as determined from resistivity measurements and zero resistance below 14 K. The material made from commercial grade oxides has a superconducting transition with a midpoint of 7 K.

H. Maeda et al., Japanese Journal of Applied Physics, 27, no. 2, L209 - L210 (1988), disclose an oxide superconductor $BiSrCaCu_2O_x$ with a T_c of about 105K.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

This invention provides novel superconducting compositions having the nominal formula $Bi_aSr_bCa_cCu_3O_x$ wherein a is from about 1 to about 2, b is from about 3/8 to about 4, c is from about 3/4 to about 2 and x = (1.5 a + b + c + y) where y is from about 2 to about 5, with the proviso that b + c is from about 3/2 to about 5, said compositions having superconducting transition temperatures of about 70 K or higher. Preferably, a is from about 3/2 to about 2, b is from about 3/2 to about 4, c is from about 1 to about 3/2 and b + c is about 3-5. The superconducting transition temperature of the preferred composition will be from at least 77 K (liquid nitrogen) up to about 115 K.

In terms of a definition of the metal oxide phases that provide superconductivity for the composition of the nominal formula previously given, the present invention provides superconducting metal oxide phases of the formula

$$Bi_2\ Sr_{3-z}\ Ca_z\ Cu_2\ O_{8+w}$$

wherein z is from about 0.1 to about 0.9, preferably 0.4 to 0.8 and most preferably 0.6 to 0.7; and

w is greater than zero but less than about 1.

Thus, the nominal formula for these superconducting compositions that contain substantial amounts of the above-mentioned metal oxide phase that provides superconductivity becomes $Bi_aSr_bCa_cCu_3O_x$

wherein a is from about 1 to about 3, b is from about 3/8 to about 4, c is from about 3/16 to about 2 and x = (1.5a + b+ c + y) where y is from about 2 to about 5, with the proviso that b + c is from about 3/2 to about 5.

A process for making these compositions consists essentially of heating a mixture comprised of stoichiometric quantities of the metal oxides, for example, Bi_2O_3, SrO or SrO_2, CaO, and CuO, or precursors of the metal oxides, e.g., carbonates such as $CaCO_3$, nitrates such as $Sr(NO_3)_2$, etc. at about 775 °C to about 900 °C for about 8 to about 48 hours or more in air. Preferred are heating temperatures of about 850 °C to about 900 °C.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The superconducting compositions of this invention have the nominal formula $Bi_aSr_bCa_cCu_3O_x$ wherein a is from about 1 to about 3, b is from about 3/8 to about 4, c is from about 3/16 to about 2 and x = (1.5 a + b + c + y) where y is from about 2 to about 5, with the proviso that b + c is from about 3/2 to about 5. These compositions have superconducting transition temperatures of at least 70 K up to about 120 K. Preferred are the compositions wherein a is from about 3/2 to about 3, b is from about 3/2 to about 4, c is from about 1/2 to about 3/2 and b + c is about 3-5. These preferred compositions have superconducting transition temperatures above 77 K, the temperature of liquid nitrogen.

The superconducting $Bi_aSr_bCa_cCu_3O_x$ compositions can be prepared by the following process. Stoichiometric quantities of Bi_2O_3, SrO, CaO, and CuO are mixed, for example, by grinding them together in a mortar. Precursors of the oxides such as carbonates can be substituted for one or more of the oxides. Alternatively, an intimate stoichiometric mixture of precursors of the oxides can be prepared from a solution of precursors such as nitrates or acetates, either by precipitation from such a solution or by drying such a solution by evaporation of the solvent or by spray- or freeze-drying. The mixture of oxides or precursors in the form of a powder or a pressed pellet is then placed in a container made of a non-reactive material such as alumina or gold. The container is then placed in a furnace and heated at about 775 °C to about 900 °C for about 8 to about 48 hours in air, preferably from about 850 °C to about 900 °C. The superconducting transition temperature is generally higher if the heating temperature is in the preferred range. Melting should be avoided. Since melting occurs at heating temperatures of about 900 °C and higher, reaction must occur below these temperatures.

Cooling can be done slowly by either turning off the power to the furnace and allowing the container to furnace-cool or by programming the furnace to cool at a slow rate, e. g., at 2 °C per minute. When the temperature is below 100 °C, e.g. ambient temperature (about 20 °C) the container is removed from the furnace and the black crystalline product is recovered. Cooling can also be accomplished by quenching at ambient temperature the material which had been heated to 850-900 °C.

A superconducting $Bi_aSr_bCa_cCu_3O_x$ composition can be produced even when the relative amounts of reactants are chosen outside of the stoichiomeric limits dictated by the ranges enumerated above for a, b and c. The superconducting composition would then be composed of at least one superconducting phase along with other non-superconducting phases.

Superconductivity can be confirmed by observing magnetic flux exclusion, i.e., the Meissner effect. This effect can be measured by the method described in an article by E. Polturak and B. Fisher in Physical Review B, 36, 5586(1987).

The superconducting compositions of this invention can be used to conduct current extremely efficiently or to provide a magnetic field for magnetic imaging for medical purposes. Thus, by cooling the composition in the form of a wire or bar to a temperature below the superconducting transition temperature, e.g., at or below about 115 K, preferably at or below about 85 K, by exposing the material to liquid nitrogen in a manner well known to those in this field; and initiating a flow of electrical current, one can obtain such flow without any electrical resistive losses. To provide exceptionally high magnetic fields with minimal power losses, the wire mentioned previously could be wound to form a coil which would be exposed to liquid helium before inducing any current into the coil. The superconducting compositions of this invention can also be used to provide diamagnetic fields that are extremely persistent. Such fields are obtained by exposing the compositions in the form of a sheet or similar construction to an external magnetic field, the sheet being cooled to a temperature below the superconducting transition temperature, e.g. cooled to between 77 K and 115 K, by exposure to liquid nitrogen. Such fields can be used to levitate objects as large as railroad cars. These superconducting compositions are also useful in Josephson devices such as SQUIDS (superconducting quantum interference devices) and in instruments that are based on the Josephson effect such as high speed sampling circuits and voltage standards. These compositions appear to be more stable, especially in the presence of water, than prior superconductive compositions having transition temperatures in the same range. The compositions are also more easily processed than prior art compositions.

EXAMPLE 1

A composition of nominal formula $Bi_2Sr_2CaCu_3O_x$ was prepared in the following manner. Bi_2O_3 (4.6596 g), SrO_2 (2.3924 g), $CaCO_3$ - (1.0009 g) and CuO (2.3865 g) were mixed and ground together in an agate mortar for thirty minutes. The powder mixture was used to press 10 pellets, each 10 mm in diameter and about 2 mm thick.

One of the pressed pellets was placed on a gold tray and the tray placed in a furnace and

heated in air at a rate of 10°C per minute to 875°C and then held at 875°C for 36 hours. The furnance was then cooled at the rate of 1°C per minute to a temperature below about 100°C before the tray was removed.

Plate-like crystals which exhibited cleavage in the basal plane were predominant in the melt. They were mechanically separated and used for further characterization and structure determination. Both flux exclusion and electrical resistivity measurement on the single crystals revealed a sharp superconducting transition at T_c of about 95 K.

The superconducting metal oxide phase of this composition was identified as

$Bi_2Sr_{3-z}Ca_zCu_2O_{8+w}$

where "z" was about 0.65 and "w" was less than 1 but greater than zero. The structure based on an A-centered orthorhombic cell with a = 5.409Å, b = 5.414Å and c = 30.914Å was determined by using single crystal x-ray diffraction data.

The structure was made up of alternating double copper-oxygen sheets and double bismuth-oxygen sheets. There were Ca^{2+} and Sr^{2+} cations between the adjacent Cu-O sheets; Sr^{2+} cations were also found between the Cu-O and Bi-O sheets. High resolution transmission electron microscopy studies showed that the b axis is actually 27.07 Å, an increase of a factor of five over the subcell dimension. This superstructure can also be observed by x-ray diffraction on single crystals but twinning can make it appear that the superstructure is along both the a and b axes.

It should be understood that when "z" in the formula for the metal oxide superconducting phase is anywhere from about 0.1 to 0.9, "a" and "b" are both about 5.4Å and "c" is about 31Å, while α, β and γ (the angles associated with the unit cell as known to those skilled in the art) are about 90°. Furthermore, as shown in this example, one or two of the subcell dimensions (a or b or c) can be multiplied by an integer of from about 2 to about 10 to obtain a cell exhibiting the superstructure of the superconducting phase of this invention.

Claims

1. A superconducting metal oxide phase of the formula $Bi_2Sr_{3-z}Ca_zCu_2O_{8+w}$ wherein z is a value from about 0.1 to about 0.9 and w is a value greater than zero and less than 1.

2. A superconducting metal oxide phase as in Claim 1 wherein z is from about 0.4 to about 0.8.

3. A superconducting metal oxide phase as in Claim 1 wherein z is 0.6 to 0.7 and having a structure based on an A-centered orthorhombic cell with a = 5.409Å, b = 5.414Å and c = 30.914Å.

Patentansprüche

1. Supraleitende Metalloxidphase der Formel $Bi_2Sr_{3-z}Ca_zCu_2O_{8+w}$, worin z ein Wert von etwa 0,1 bis etwa 0,9 ist und w ein Wert ist, der größer als Null und kleiner als 1 ist.

2. Supraleitende Metalloxidphase gemäß Anspruch 1, wobei z von etwa 0,4 bis etwa 0,8 ist.

3. Supraleitende Metalloxidphase gemäß Anspruch 1, wobei z 0,6 bis 0,7 ist, mit einer Struktur, die auf einer A-zentrierten orthorhombischen Zelle mit a = 5,409 Å, b = 5,414 Å und c = 30,914 Å beruht.

Revendications

1. Une phase d'oxyde métallique supraconductrice de formule $Bi_2Sr_{3-z}Ca_zCu_2O_{8+w}$ où z a une valeur d'environ 0,1 à environ 0,9 et w a une valeur supérieure à zéro et inférieure à l'unité.

2. Une phase d'oxyde métallique supraconductrice selon la revendication 1 dans laquelle la valeur de z est d'environ 0,4 à environ 0,8.

3. Une phase d'oxyde métallique supraconductrice selon la revendication 1 dans laquelle la valeur de z est de 0,6 à 0,7, ladite phase présentant une structure basée sur une maille orthorhombique A-centrée de dimensions a = 5,409 Å, b = 5,414 Å et c = 30,914 Å.

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